

Views of the Environment in Asian Countries

— Their Relationship to Sustainable Development —



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A Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples' View of the Environment — An Analysis of the Anti-dam Construction Movement —

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1. Introduction

Geographically, Taiwan belongs to the Pacific Rim islands located to the east of the Eurasian Continent. Climatically, it is influenced by both the continental air masses and the currents of the western Pacific Ocean flowing along its coasts. Topographically, mountains and hilly areas account for approximately two-thirds of the isle's area, and as mountains are steep, rivers are short and rapid. The wet season and distribution of rainfall is unevenly distributed throughout the year: rain is concentrated in the few months of the summer, and winter is dry, respectively giving rise to problems of flood and drought. For this reason, the development, utilization, and control of water resources have played an crucial role in the lives of the people of Taiwan.

As for the social utilization of water, in particular, irrigated rice cultivation is common, and approximately 75% of the population is concentrated on the western alluvial plains. Furthermore, growing industrialization and urbanization since the latter half of the 19th century greatly increased the demand for water in specific areas. However, as resources, such as petroleum and gas, are scarce, hydroelectric power generation is the only source of electricity that can be self-supplied. Owing to these circumstances, in recent years, construction of dams has been regarded as the only solution to the problem of securing water for industrial and household use in Taiwan.

In the course of human history, damming has been one of the oldest attempts by mankind to control the natural environment, as is evident by the ancient civilizations that flourished in Egypt, Babylon, India, Persia, and China five thousand years ago, each of which made advances in irrigation technology. Accordingly, the dam system needs to be supported by a huge state bureaucracy and is therefore the most significant symbol of civilization in its struggle against nature (Wittfogel, 1957). However, the construction of dams throughout the world toward the end of this century has been described as a form of technological colonialism, and has unexpectedly raised suspicion and resistance of the indigenous peoples (Cohen, 1994). The same phenomenon is also occurring in Taiwan. In the beginning of 1994, the Rukai, living in the mountains in the south started off a protest movement against the construction of a dam planned by the government. It so happened that this coincided with movements by indigenous peoples in other countries, and the Rukai began their counterattack against contemporary civilization, advocating both a traditional and naturalistic philosophy of ecology.

The purpose of the present paper is to analyze the cultural discourses made by the Rukai in their protest against the dam construction plan, based on ethnographical references, and to study the frustrations and difficulties experienced by the Taiwanese people in relation to the Rukai view of the environment. In addition, this paper touches upon the unbalanced historical development of cultures of different nature in Taiwanese soci-

ety, as well as the ensuing disagreements concerning their respective view of the environment. The author concludes by reexamining the relationship between environment and culture, history, and ethnicity.

2. Rukai Culture and Nature in Hawcha Village

The central role in the anti-dam construction movement beginning in southern Taiwan in the fall of 1993, was played by the Rukai people of Hawcha Village, Wu-tai County, Pingtung Prefecture. The Rukai count approximately 6,000 people, inhabiting both the eastern and western flanks of the southern part of the central massif. Hawcha Village is the oldest settlement among the western Rukai people, who recount their origins as follows:

Our ancestors followed a clouded tiger, the wisest animal in the Taiwan mountains, and crossed the mountains soaring from the southeastern coast, arriving among mountains where a clear spring flowed. The place where they decided to settle is present-day Hawcha Village.

Based on this legend, the Rukai people of Hawcha Village call themselves the "descendants of the clouded tiger." As was taught by their ancestors, killing of clouded tigers is prohibited, and if anyone kills a clouded tiger, the hunter is to be strictly punished. The clouded tiger, a large animal previously found in Taiwan, is said to have become extinct due to the destruction of its living environment and reckless hunting for its skin. Today, the clouded tiger only appears in tales told by the people of Hawcha and is worshipped as a sacred animal. In addition to the clouded tiger, the Rukai people also tell legends about the most poisonous serpent called hundred-pace snake of the mountains of Taiwan. The story is about an aristocrat's daughter marrying a prince who is an incarnation of this snake. In the Rukai language, the vocabulary of this snake also means "elder," and if one encounters a hundred-pace snake in the mountains, one must first ask it for permission to pass and then tell it not to be caught and killed by human beings. The relationship between man and the most feared animal in Taiwan is thus a harmonious one in these myths and legends, as is often found in the traditions of other indigenous peoples in Taiwan. The Rukai people have no written language, but their history has been handed down orally, in the form myths and legends.

The exact date of arrival of the indigenous peoples on Taiwan is not known. What is certain is that the Han people from the coastal region of southeastern China settled in the western plains of Taiwan 400 years ago. Thereafter, as a result of migration, marriage, trade, and strife, approximately ten groups of indigenous peoples living on the plains and in the hills assimilated into the Han people. Thus, the Han eventually became the largest ethnic group in Taiwan. In contrast, other indigenous peoples living in the vast central massif and in eastern Taiwan continued to retain their tradition of headhunting, and consistently resisted assimilation with the Han. They repelled invasions, and continued to protect their territory until the end of the Ching dynasty.

In 1895, Japan began colonization of Taiwan under the modern state system, introduced by the Meiji Government. Although met with repeated resistance by the indigenous peoples, the Japanese eventually gained control of the entire area and forced the indigenous inhabitants of Taiwan to change their traditional customs and lifestyle. Manners and customs, such as headhunting, tattooing, and tooth extraction, became strictly

prohibited, and irrigated rice cultivation was encouraged and taught as an alternative to slash and burn cultivation. However, the Japanese influence weakened with Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, and with the retreat of the Kuomintang troops approximately two million Han people evacuated from the continent of China to Taiwan.

In postwar Taiwan, the Han ethnic group became the absolute majority, dominating the politics. The Han government used the educational and social security facilities built by the Japanese to implement their own educational and social systems. Basically, settlement and cultivation of the mountain areas from the plains became restricted to a certain extent by the use of a mountain reservation policy. However, most of the mountains and forests had become nationalized during the Japanese occupation and were taken over by the Han government after the war. Both politically and economically the indigenous peoples became the lowest social stratum in Taiwanese society. The average annual income of the indigenous peoples does not even come close to half of the average income of Han Taiwanese. Currently, the total population of the nine groups of these indigenous peoples is approximately 350,000, less than 2% of the total population of Taiwan. Among these peoples, the Rukai constitute the third smallest ethnic group.

Although a weak minority, the Rukai live in mountains at up to 1,000 meters in altitude in southern Taiwan: the rugged geographical features have served as a barrier, and have enabled them to maintain their own way of life and culture for the last few hundred years. Of the Rukai living on the banks of Ailyaw River, Hawcha is the largest settlement, having a population of over one thousand at its peak. When the population exceeds the tolerance of the environment, some of the villagers move to nearby mountains and form a new settlement. Many of the settlements in Wu-tai County other than Hawcha have thus branched out from Hawcha.

Similar to other mountain indigenous inhabitants in Taiwan, the traditional way of life of the Rukai of Hawcha takes place mainly in their dwellings, on their farmland, and fishing and hunting grounds, and is self-sufficient. Main crops are grains resistant to drought, such as millet, taro, sweet potatoes, and peanuts, and are grown by slash and burn cultivation. After three to four years of cultivation, fields are left to rest for several years, with the ash of burned grasses spread over as fertilizer, before being cultivated again. This agricultural technique does not require irrigation facilities, but does require certain areas set aside for resting. In addition, to obtain sources of protein, the Rukai hunt in the forests, fish in the rivers, and raise livestock on a small scale. The subtropical forests provide vegetables, honey, and fruits. In living memory of the people of Hawcha, they have never experienced a shortage of food. Only salt and metal containers cannot be self-supplied and are obtained through trade with the Han people of the plains.

As for social systems, theirs is a patriarchal society centered around houses inherited by the eldest sons. Households are divided into chiefs, aristocrats, and commoners, each with specific duties, according to a precisely differentiated social hierarchy. Social hierarchy is determined by birth, but is not unchangeable, and one's social class moves up and down all the time, being adjusted through matrimony and contribution to the settlement. Amid such flexibility, a stability of social structure and order is retained (Kasahara, 1993). Among the aristocrats, there are those in charge of religion and annual events of agriculture and hunting, who predict natural disasters and misfortunes and remember the history of the village. Among the commoners, there are those who excel

in hunting, specialize in carving, and those who serve as messengers. Rukai culture includes agriculture, labor, hunting, religion, oral legends, architecture, arts, and games and sports: all closely related to one another. This type of society and culture is also inseparable from its natural environment, which serves as the foundation of their lives.

For the Rukai of Hawcha, the natural environment is the essential space for everyday life, and equally a symbolic sacred space. The most basic unit of the social system, "household," is called "balio" in the Rukai language, and in addition to "house," it also refers to "homeland" and "a place where one settles down." Traditionally, funerals are held within the house where the deceased was born, and the body is buried under the floor of the central pillar of the house (made of slate sheets). It is believed that the dead go to an imaginary city, and that the souls of ancestors all reside in a place called "balukuan." "Balukuan" is the peak of a mountain to the northeast of the village. When passing through this area while hunting, the Rukai always pay their respects to the mountain. In addition to balukuan, Mt. North Dawu (3,180 m), the highest peak in view from the village, as well as the mountains surrounding the village, and Mt. Jingbu, the source of spring water, all have sacred meanings, and make up the "home" of the Rukai, together with that of other living beings and ancestral spirits. Among the neighboring people, the word "Rukai" also means "people living at the top of cold mountains," and in the Rukai language "forests."

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the traditional independency of Hawcha has been under constant threat by the state as well as by competing ethnic groups. After Japan established control over the mountain areas, chiefs and aristocrats were prohibited from collecting taxes from commoners, greatly weakening their power. After the war, influenced by modern development of the plain: lack of transportation, medical treatment, and education were pointed out as being the major problems of the inhabitants of the mountain areas. Encouraged by the government, the inhabitants of Hawcha decided to move downstream along the banks of Aylyaw River. Under the slogan of "improvement of the living environment and pursuit of further development," transmigration was completed in 1980. The new village adopted the name "Hawcha." The new village is about three hours on foot from the old village, and is approximately 15 minutes by car to the villages of the plain people. Buildings in the village were designed according to certain standards, and villagers had to prepare cash to repay the construction costs loaned by the government. Thus, for the past ten years or so, every household has been harassed by the question of how to earn cash to repay their debts. Moreover, the majority of the youth and adults had no other choice but to go to the cities and work as laborers at the bottom rung of society or become sailors. Ironically, as a result of migration, the population drain of the village accelerated, inhabitants decreasing to even less than 500 by 1990. Owing to the subsequent decreased number of school-age children, the only elementary school in the village had to be closed.

For the past ten years or so, having experienced a rapid deterioration of their society and culture as well as bitterness following this recent migration, the people of Hawcha started two cultural promotion movements, which provided cultural discourses concerning their view of environment.

3. Discourses concerning Protests Against the Majia Dam

1) Start of the Movement

Even after the move in 1980 to new Hawcha which is closer to the plains, the exodus of young people has continued. At first, the old people felt homesick and longed for their homes in old Hawcha, and once in a while visited the former village. In 1987, an old man who excelled in carving began to repair a slate house that was falling apart, and then for a long time thereafter lived in his house in the original village producing his carvings. After a while, some of the youths and adults who moved to the plains in pursuit of jobs began to return to old Hawcha, having experienced discrimination and frustration for several years. They seriously considered returning to their traditional way of life in old Hawcha Village. Originally, these people had been the first to move out at the start of the migration to new Hawcha. However, finally in February 1994, they began an activity to "rediscover old Hawcha" and visited the houses of old Hawcha along with more than 100 Rukais of new Hawcha (most of them visiting old Hawcha for the first time since migration). The central figure of this activity is Auvini Kadresengan, a descendant of a household in charge of keeping Rukai history. After careful deliberation, he decided to give up his job in the plains, and as if prompted by the "guidance of ancestral spirits," he returned to old Hawcha and started living there. He called on others to also start living in old Hawcha.

A single initiative such as this could not possibly change the fact that villagers had moved downstream to new Hawcha. It became clear that the majority of the people wanted to remain in the new village, and that it was impossible for all the villagers to return to the old village and lead the traditional way of life. However, this initiative made villagers aware of the inseparable cultural bond between old and new Hawcha, and that because old Hawcha was lost, people lost their spiritual base and home of their souls. At the same time, they realized that new Hawcha had become the only place of contact between the plains and the old village.

Just around this time, when movements for cultural revival were growing, the news spread that the government was planning to select a point on the intersection of the south Aylyaw River and north Aylyaw River in the mountains of Pingtung Prefecture, as the construction site of the "Majia Dam." The Majia Dam plan was proposed by the government as a solution to water shortage problems expected to occur in major agricultural and industrial cities in the south, such as Pingtung, Kaohsiung, and Tainan, and the county itself, after the year 2005. According to the plan, devised by the Water Resource Planning Committee of the Department of Economy, the total construction cost of the dam would amount to 100 billion Taiwan dollars (approx. 4 billion U.S. dollars), the dam would measure 167 meters in height, and would be the third largest dam in Taiwan. After completion of the dam, two villages downstream Aylyaw River will become submerged under the dam lake. One is new Hawcha (population: 432) and the other is Illa Community (population: 150) which consists of half Rukai and half Paiwan people. If the Majia Dam plan passes related government legislatures, construction is scheduled to commence in 1998 and be completed in the year 2007.

The people of Hawcha were extremely shocked to hear the news of the dam construction plan. In April 1994, the meeting of the representatives of Wu-tai County citi-

zens voted to oppose dam construction, and in May, villagers signed a petition against it and carried out various protest activities. In July, "the Hawcha District Majia Dam Opposition Self-help Association" was formed, and a series of protest activities took place. Taipan Sasale, a member of the elite and one of the few university graduates in the village, served as the chairman of the self-help association. Soon after the association was formed, he protested along with Hawcha villagers and presented a petition to withdraw the dam construction plan in front of the Pingtung Prefecture government office. The protesters were clad in traditional costumes and petitioned for retreating the plan with traditional songs and dances. Far from being able to meet the governor, they were ordered by the police to leave for violating the "assembly and demonstration law." Moreover, as the leader, Taipan Sasale was prosecuted by the district court. However, he did not consent to abide by the laws of the Han people and refused to appear in court. Consequently, the court designated him as a most wanted criminal. Though Taipan Sasale escaped, he was arrested on August 25 the following year. On September 2, he defended himself in court as follows (Wu Jing-Fa, 1995):

We Taiwanese aborigines have regarded the green mountains as our father, and the blue water as our mother. Our tradition is to revere the mountains and worship the water. However, the Taiwanese Han government has repeatedly destroyed this beautiful world given by these gods... Judge, to answer your question why I led the people to protest, I reply as follows: it is because of my love for this land, and that same love has brought me here today.

The decision of the district court was 50 days imprisonment. Taipan Sasale paid a fine in lieu of this punishment, but this incident made him a hero of the village, and because it made headlines for days in the national newspaper, it attracted the attention of the mass media. Currently, with the cooperation of the people of Hawcha and a christian church (village seniors) in Wu-tai County, the self-help association is continuing its activities of protest.

2) Indigenous of Protest "Ethics of Wilderness" and "Mt. Dawu Permanent Cultural Ecology Zone" Alternative Plan

In the course of the Rukai anti-dam movement, a magazine called "*Indigenous Post*" (first issue in 1989) became the forum of arguments against the dam. Taipan Sasale came to serve as the president of this magazine company in 1993. By analysis of cultural discourses in this magazine, the Rukai people's concept toward the environment is discussed below.

The first statement is from an editorial on the front page of "*Indigenous Post*" No. 25 (August 10, 1994) published after the petition activity by the Majia Dam Opposition Self-help Association. Titled "Saving the Homeland of the Clouded Tiger People," this editorial clearly states their main argument against the dam.

The Rukai people are mountain people. Until now, they have maintained their relationship of harmonious interdependence with the

river flowing from the high mountains. Mountains and rivers are one, and the green mountains and blue water are both important for fostering life...Old Hawcha is located at the source of Aylyaw River, and Aylyaw River is the source of clean water for the Hawcha people. Because of the blessings it provides, the people preserve the clearness of this water source. This is our conception toward nature and land handed down through generations by our ancestors. This is because the water of Aylyaw is our mother who gives birth to life and culture.

The Aylyaw valley is the respiratory system of Dawu mountains. Dam construction will destroy the ecosystem of this valley and result in the disappearance of the only paradise of wild animals remaining in Taiwan. As our ancestors above shake their heads and lament, to ensure the survival of the Rukai people and the development of the entire society of Rukai as well as its cultural heritage, we pray to our ancestors above the Dawu Mountain. The people of Hawcha, along with Rukai and other indigenous peoples, will resist with "headhunting" again. Even at the risk of our lives, we intend to protect our land handed down to us by our ancestors for more than thousand years.

In this statement, in addition to speaking out against dam construction from the perspective of Rukai culture, an alternative to the dam is also suggested.

We utter strong words of protest against the government and underline that Majia Dam is not the only way of solving the water shortage problem in southern Taiwan. The construction of Dam should be abandoned,...and a "Mt. Dawu Permanent Cultural Ecology Zone" should be established as soon as possible. There, mountains and forests can be used to secure water sources, to preserve folk culture, and protect the natural ecosystem. Through harmonious coexistence, balance of the ecosystem can be maintained, and with the help of science and technology, the mountains and forests can function as natural water sources.

This idea was also presented in "Ethics of Wilderness" signed by Taipan Sasale in "Indigenous Post" No. 27 (July 15, 1995 issue). In this article, he proposes the concept of the "forest dam" and states that the development of forest dams is the best method for stopping the destruction of the upper reaches of rivers and water sources. The native philosophy of traditional use of water sources involves balance with Mother Nature and avoidance of excessive use. It proposes sustainable utilization based on the principle of nature's power of reproduction and the biological life cycle.

Moreover, in an article entitled "Regret and Hope for the New Ethnicity" (ibid), Sasale opposes Taiwan's view of its 400 years of history. This view of history originally came about as a counter-argument used by advocators of independence in Taiwan society today against advocators of a united China, a competing view which based on China's 5,000 years of history.

To understand the history of Taiwan within the framework of 400 years of Han history, is to recognize Taiwan in the framework of imperialism and "discovery." This equally implies a view of the Taiwan where indigenous peoples had been living 400 years ago as something dark, barbarous, and without history...The "pirate experience," "refugee character," and "pioneer spirit" of Taiwan immigrant society meant in the early years for the indigenous peoples, the beginning of "exploitation" and "invasion."...The immigrant Han culture had made it habit to "destroy, abandon, and move," in other words, to set free the "pirate spirit." This spirit can only be used for developing foreign trade...For the construction of a pluralistic culture and formation of a new ethnic nation in Taiwan, rather than simply pursuing what Japan, and the Western societies have captured. What is important is that Taiwan pays attention to the fact that it has already been influenced by the indigenous culture...I would like to ask: without indigenous peoples, how in the world can you build a "new Taiwanese ethnicity"?...The ideal of an immigrant society should be continuous learning. Now is the time for Taiwanese society to learn from the indigenous peoples what we have already forgotten, that is, the philosophy of the land of the Orient, harmony with Mother Nature, and the spirit of the sustainable cycle of nature.

This argument points at the ethnocentrism at the heart of the view of Taiwan's 400 years of history, and states that the immigrant culture born from such a view of history is destructive to its environment. Such harsh criticism against the civilization of the Han people has never been heard before. The indigenous peoples feel unprecedented pride in their concept of land, nature, and their permanent utilization and development, and are asking the Han people to learn from this tradition. They are no longer minor ethnic groups that are forced to assimilate into the Han. Despite this, the Han people have not brought forth any counter-argument; on the contrary, they are supporting the dam construction with other arguments.

3) Dam Construction Advocators — Argument of the Administration

While the policy procedure for the construction of the Majia Dam is not even completed, the government is already publicizing the dam construction in order to lay the groundwork for commencing construction. The statements made by Governor Wu of Pingtung Prefecture represent the position of top government officials, executing the construction of the dam as an order from the central government. In response to questions from local assembly members, he has repeatedly emphasized preferential compensation to residents who agree to migrate. In addition to payment of the highest land compensation in the history of Taiwan, he promises employment and prosperity at the new site, and advocates development of tourism. The new settlement will become the "Aborigine Cultural Model Area," and all houses will be equipped with an extra two rooms and a bath and toilet to enable them to operate as an "inn" for the development of tourism. The governor is trying to obtain the consent of the residents on the above-men-

tioned terms. Furthermore, he emphasizes the progress of modern science and technology, and guarantees that geological problems can be prevented, that the dam can withstand earthquakes, and that there will be no danger after the dam construction. (*"The Common Daily"* October 25, 1995)

J. Wu is the chief member of the "Water Resource Committee" of the Department of Economy in charge of overseeing the water resource plans throughout Taiwan. His statements represent those of government agencies involved in the dam plan. In his book that commemorates the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Water Resource Committee, he contributed an article entitled "Water Resource Projects for the Coming 21st Century." In this, he states the following:

In fact, we humans cannot escape from the laws of survival, that is, the survival of the fittest and natural selection. The 21st century will be an era of fierce competition. It will also be an era of competition for the financial world and for economy. Many people will be appalled at the fierceness of such competition, but it is inescapable. However, this will be a peaceful and free competition, a competition of internationalization and democracy. Under these circumstances, for us to survive, we must compete. In any region, competition is necessary. Through competition, regions develop. Without competition, we will be dismissed from the earth. Ten to twenty years ago, the income of the Philippines was higher than ours. However, because they lacked the mind of competition, they have gone under...Based on the prediction that Taiwan will achieve a modest economic growth rate, water resource supply plan for the districts of Taiwan has been formed. The major aim of the water source development plan of each district is to satisfy the demand for water for household use and industrial use...In the 21st century, the population will continue to increase and concentrate in the cities. For this reason, water resource projects are important in view of future urbanization...For our country to join the advanced nations by the 21st century, it is necessary to promote and develop projects related to water supply.

This statement by Wu, which is based on a Darwinian theory of evolution, reflects his (or the government's) blueprint of Taiwan in the 21st century which emphasizes urbanization and industrialization. This statement justifies the water resource policy of the country's administration.

Nothing reflects the Taiwanese official view of the environment more clearly than the instructions given to local governments by President Lee Tenghui. On August 20, 1995, President Lee Tenghui inspected the Mutan Dam in Pingtung. At that occasion, he said, "the quality of water in Kaohsiung is extremely bad. People cannot drink the water of Fengshan Dam. I hope that the Majia Dam will be completed soon, so that Kaohsiung citizens can drink clean water" (*"China Times"* front page, August 21, 1995). This kind of lip service paid by the president, the highest government leader, to the official policy, in response to the demands of a large number of people (population of greater Kaohsiung district: approx. two million) plainly shows the government's simplistic way of

thinking. In view of the election of national assembly members at the end of the year and the general election in the spring of 1996, the logic of the democratic government system is to place priority on the happiness and benefit of the majority (Kaohsiung citizens).

It can be said that the above statements made by three administrative officials, indicating the official view of the Taiwan government were made from a position of advantage in terms of authority. The intellectual background to such statements is supported by power and constitutes a kind of cultural hegemony. What this implies is that the paradigmatic views of Han civilization today toward the environment, as represented by government officials, and that of the aborigines are completely different.

4. Conclusion: Clashes between Culture, History, and Ethnicity in Environmental Issues

In the above, this paper has examined the ethnographical conditions of the Rukai people and their movement against the Majia Dam. As evident from the ethnographic references, the Rukai's view of the environment is based on close coexistence between nature culture. Their feeling of awe toward animals, mountains, forests, rivers, water, and land differs from the immigrant culture of the Han who arrived much later on Taiwan. In other words, to the Rukai people, for human beings to lose their living environment is the same as allowing their culture to die. This importance given to nature in their culture seems not exist among the Han.

The Han people in Taiwan came in large numbers to Taiwan at the end of the Ming Dynasty (17th century) to escape warfare and because of a severe population increase in the southeastern coastal areas of the mainland. These people held high the image of their homeland, called "Tangshan" and the idea of "returning home in glory" some day. The Han people have maintained an agricultural civilization for a long time, and as shown by a proverb, they never doubted that "human beings will surpass heaven (nature)." Through a couple of hundreds of years of effort, they attempted to change the new land to resemble the topography of their homeland. Under the 50-year Japanese colonial rule from the end of the 19th century, exploitation of mountain and forest resources and assimilation policy were promoted. After 1945, following the defeat of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) in the civil war on mainland China, many war refugees poured into Taiwan. These people also held strong feelings toward the mainland and firmly believed that someday they would return home. In the mentality of such immigrants, colonialists, and refugees, little importance is given to nature. Instead, the struggle for survival is dominant. As often discussed in the field of human ecology in recent years, an environment-friendly culture is ultimately more likely to become a sustainable culture (Milton, 1993). Accordingly, it ought to be discussed in depth as an environmental issue, whether the Rukai's slash and burn cultivation or the Han irrigation agriculture is better suited to the natural environment of Taiwan. However, as plainly shown by the case of Hawcha of the Rukai people, at this point, it is already too late for the indigenous people to go back to their old ways. Also, the Han people are transforming rapidly from an agricultural civilization into an industrial urban civilization, entrapped in the competitive system of international economy.

Today, near the end of the 20th century, discussions on the natural environment, triggered by a single dam construction plan, have exposed the existence of an antagonism between "indigenous people vs. immigrants, colonialists, and refugees." However, under the competition of state's development, there is a tendency to replace the antagonism with the democratic concept of "minority vs. majority." Whether the minority should be sacrificed for the sake of the happiness of the majority living in the cities cannot be discussed in this paper. However, the words of the Rukai people involved in the anti-dam construction struggle are filled with the anger of a long repressed people. With this incident as a trigger, they have come to represent environmentalists and have begun to strongly criticize the Han civilization in Taiwan and their right to interpret Taiwan's history. On the other hand, they also express their desire to become members of a "new Taiwanese ethnicity" made up of indigenous peoples, immigrants, colonialists, and refugees. However, the administration led by the Han hoists flags of economic development and democracy under authoritarian statements. If both sides continue to pursue their separate courses without compromise nor clues to solving the clashes between culture, history, and ethnicity in the approach of environmental problems, it will become the greatest obstacle to any environmental issue in Taiwan today.

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