

Chapter Nine

Wu Jinfa and the Melancholy Mountain Forests of China's Border Cultures: New Voices in Taiwanese Literature¹

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Tang Yingshen's death and Taiwanese consciousness

There was an outcry against the government among Taiwan's leading intellectuals and writers when on 15 May 1987 the jurisdictional authorities of the Republic of China on Taiwan had Tang Yingshen, an eighteen-year old youth from Mt. Ali in central Taiwan, sentenced to death and executed. Tang Yingshen hailed from the Tsou, one of the nine ethnic minority groups of indigenous or aboriginal 'mountain tribes' (*gaoshan zu*) living in present-day Taiwan.² The Tsou consist of about 7500 members among the approximately 338,200 indigenous people who account for 1.7 per cent of Taiwan's total population.³ Tang Yingshen's execution brought the social and cultural problems of Taiwan's indigenous peoples into the foreground of national consciousness. It sparked off a debate among

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

³ *Neizhengbu diwuqi minzhengzhuguan huibao*, 1 December 1990, 2. On the Tsou see Wang Songshan, *Alishan Zouzu de lishi yu zhengzhi* (The history and politics of the Tsou people from Alishan), Taipei: Daoxiang, 1990.

Taiwan's intellectuals which is closely linked to the issues of Taiwanese identity, democratization and independence.

In 1986, nine days after taking on a new job in a laundrette in the capital Taipei, Tang Yingshen killed his employer and his family in a fit of fury. As his employer had refused to return Tang's identity card, Tang believed himself deprived of any possibility to quit the job which he perceived as oppressive.⁴ He had committed a serious crime, but intellectuals and writers perceived his conviction as highlighting one of the darkest corners of modern society in Taiwan: racial discrimination and oppression of the indigenous minorities. Tang Yingshen's trial triggered off a public discussion among scholars and intellectuals in the national press. For one year Taiwan's intellectuals endeavoured on behalf of Tang Yingshen to reverse the sentence of capital punishment. In the evening paper *Zili wanbao* they still sought reprieve for Tang Yingshen on the eve of his execution. They failed to prevent it but gave publicity to the plight of the indigenous peoples. Political essays and fictional narratives by both Chinese and indigenous Taiwanese writers turned Tang Yingshen into a tragic hero symbolizing the fate of Taiwan's ethnic minorities in the modern world.

The nine indigenous groups who populate Taiwan's mountain areas today differ with regard to their language, kinship system and social structure, material culture and religion.⁵ So far modern scholarship has failed to resolve the enigma of their origins. Racial and linguistic features make Taiwan's indigenous people appear as the northernmost branch of Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian stock. Scarce evidence of Palaeolithic origin suggests settlements of Melanesian populations of the late Pleistocene or post-Pleistocene eras in Taiwan.⁶ When the South-East

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

⁵ Li Yiyuan (Li Yih-yuan), *Taiwan tuzhu minzu de shehui yu wenhua* (Society and culture of Taiwan's indigenous peoples), Taipei: Lianjing, 1982.

⁶ W. Marschall, "On the Stone Age of Indonesia", *Tribus* 23, 1974, 84; Gudula Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte: Han und Nicht-Han im Taiwan der Qing-Zeit 1683-1895* (A Chapter in Chinese Border History: Han and Non-Han in Qing Dynasty Taiwan 1683-1895), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979, p. 28ff.

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

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

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

⁷ Marschall, "On the Stone Age of Indonesia", p. 71.

⁸ Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte*, p. 2.

⁹ Michael Rudolph, *Die Prostitution der Frauen der taiwanesischen Bergminderheiten* (The prostitution of Taiwan's indigenous women), Münster: Lit, 1993, p. 112.

¹⁰ Wu Jinfa, ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang: taiwan shandi sanwen xuan* (I want to marry an indigenous man: selection of prose writings on Taiwan's indigenous peoples), Taichung: Chenxing, 1989, p. 7.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 314.

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

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

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

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

Tang Yingshen's death had brought the plight of China's border cultures not only into the limelight of attention in Taiwan but also onto the political agenda of the late 1980s. The novelists Huang Chunming (1939-) and Chen Ruoxi, along with professors from Taiwan National University and Zhengzhi University and other prominent writers such as Li Ang (1952-) and Li Qiao, publicly declared their compassion for Tang Yingshen and offered their condolences to his family.¹⁵ Wu Jinfa,

¹² *ibid.*, p. 318.

¹³ Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, trans. by Alide Eberhard, Leiden: Brill, 1968, p. 9.

¹⁴ Wu Jinfa, *Yuan jia shandi lang*, p. 317.

¹⁵ *Renjian*, 20, 1987, p. 36.

however, expressed his regret that their support had come too late: 'Had they spoken out before Tang's death, I would have admired them even more'.¹⁶

The debate about human rights and ethnic minorities on Taiwan has been tightly intertwined with the topic of Taiwanese consciousness (*Taiwan yishi*) and the search for Taiwanese identity. In the 1980s certain groups of intellectuals advocated Taiwanese consciousness, which has been described as a subjective cultural identity system, as opposed to Chinese identity. Since the lifting of martial law in 1987 Taiwanese consciousness appears not just as a political issue concerned with Taiwanese independence but implies the construction of a Taiwanese cultural tradition and future development of an autonomous culture.¹⁷ The non-Han population of Taiwan plays a crucial role in the concept of Taiwanese consciousness because acknowledging their presence and status requires a rethinking of Taiwanese history while shedding light on the way China has treated her border cultures. 'Taiwan wenxue', literature with Taiwanese consciousness — no longer merely 'xiangtu wenxue' (nativist literature)¹⁸ — appears not only as a literary genre but also as a social movement and a political attitude. A rethinking of Taiwanese history from the perspective of the ethnic minorities has been a major concern in the literary works of Wu Jinfa. Hoping that literature may have the power to change attitudes and to reduce ignorance and misunderstanding, Wu Jinfa had already begun to make his contribution to the dialogue between Han and non-Han well before 1987.¹⁹

¹⁶ Wu Jinfa, *Yuan jia shandi lang*, p. 316.

¹⁷ Chang Wen-chih, "Taiwanese identity in Contemporary Literature", in Chen Chung-min, Chuang Ying-chang and Huang Shu-min, ed., *Ethnicity in Taiwan: Social, Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1994, pp. 169-187, pp. 169-170.

¹⁸ On nativist literature see Anke Pieper, "Xiangtu wenxue: eine literarische Gattung im Zentrum des Diskurses über die nationale Identität" (Nativist Literature: a literary genre at the centre of the discourse on national identity), in Eberhard Sandschneider and Helmut Martin, eds., *Interdisziplinäre Aspekte deutscher Taiwan-Forschung* (Interdisciplinary aspects of German research on Taiwan), Dortmund: Projekt, 1994, pp. 83-98.

¹⁹ Wu Jinfa, *Yuan jia shandi lang*, p. 8.

The writer Wu Jinfa

Wu Jinfa ranks among the pioneers in exploring through the medium of literature the processes of fusion and friction on the borders of Chinese civilization in present-day Taiwan. He was born into a community of Hakka in Meinong village, Kaohsiung county, Taiwan, on 14 September 1954.²⁰ During his time as a student in the Faculty of Sociology at Zhongxing University in Kaohsiung from 1973 to 1977 Wu who had grown up speaking Mandarin Chinese and the Hakka dialect, began to learn the Minnan dialect (*minnan hua*). As part of his sociological studies he made his first field trip to the mountain tribes in 1974 and further excursions followed. Wu derives his interest in the lives of Taiwan's indigenous peoples from these experiences as well as from his claim that his great-grandmother belonged to the Bunun, an indigenous tribe living in Taiwan's central mountain range.²¹ His contacts with the indigenous peoples made him question the Sino-centric ideals and the values his previous education had taught him.²²

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

²⁰ Wu Jinfa, *Wu Jinfaji* (Collected works by Wu Jinfa), Taipei: Qianwei, 1992, pp. 323-328.

²¹ Wu Jinfa, *Yuan jia shandi lang*, p. 11; Martina Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein. Wu Jinfa und die soziokulturelle Problematik der Ureinwohner Taiwans* (Taiwanese consciousness: Wu Jinfa and socio-cultural issues concerning Taiwan's indigenous peoples), Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1994, p. 14.

²² Wu Jinfa, *Zuo yige xin Taiwanren* (Becoming a new Taiwanese), Taichung: Qianwei, 1989, pp. 346-348.

Apart from his collections of short stories, Wu also published in newspapers and magazines stories about indigenous mythology and critical reviews on gender equality and women in literature and society. Wu has received literary awards from *Zhongguo shibao* and *Lianhe wenxue* and the Wu Zhuoliu prize²³ for his short and medium-length stories, including those featuring protagonists from Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Literary critics have discussed and drawn attention to these works.²⁴

Wu Jinfa ranks among the younger generation of Taiwanese writers. Together with Zheng Qingwen, Li Qiao, Chen Yingzhen and Lin Shuangbu (alias Huang Yande, 1950-), he counts among the authors who paved the way for political literature in the 1980s by breaking political taboos and throwing light on events in the 1940s and 1950s that had been neglected so far.²⁵ He has also played a part in the Taiwanese nativist literature movement of writers propagating independence and self-rule in Taiwan

²³ Wu Zhuoliu (1900-1976), a teacher from Xinzhu country, Taiwan, counts among the major Taiwanese writers active during the Japanese occupation (1895-1945) and the 1950s. In 1964 Wu founded the journal *Taiwan wenyi*.

²⁴ Okazaki Yuriko, trans. Chen Si, "Zuowei yige Taiwan zuojia" (As a Taiwanese writer), *Zili wanbao*, 26th April, 1991, p. 19 and 27th April, 1991, p. 19, and trans. Chen Si, "Taiwan zuojia - Taiwan wenxue de xin keti" (Taiwanese writers - a new issue in Taiwanese literature), *Zili wanbao*, 28th April, 1991, p. 19; Peng Rujin, "Wu Jinfa Yanming de jiedao" (Wu Jinfa's "Path of the Swallows"), *Zili wanbao*, September 17th and September 18th, 1983, and "Yanming de jiedao - Saixia de shengyin" ("Path of the Swallows" - Voices from the Saisiat), in Peng Rujin, ed., *Taiwan xiaoshuo xuan* (Selections from Taiwanese fiction), Taipei: Qianwei, 1984, pp. 181-186, and "Du Yanming de jiedao kan Wu Jinfa de bianmao" (Wu Jinfa's metamorphosis as it emerges from a reading of "Path of the Swallows"), *Wenxun* 19, 1985, pp. 74-78, and "Bentu wenxue yu bentuyu wenxue" (Literature on indigenous issues and literature in indigenous languages), *Zili wanbao*, 28th April, 1991, and "Yingshi shuyu Laonongqi de zuojia - Wu Jinfa" (Should be a writer belonging to Laonongqi - Wu Jinfa) in Wu Jinfa, *Wu Jinfaji* (Collected works by Wu Jinfa), Taipei: Qianwei, 1992, pp. 303-317; Li Qiao, "Xiaoshuo jia de shengzhang - xu Yanming de jiedao" (A novelist grows up - preface to "Path of the Swallows"), *Xinshu yuekan*, 17, 1985, pp. 64-65; Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Knickley, eds., *Modern Chinese Writers - Self-portrayals*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992; Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*.

²⁵ Ye Shitao, *Xilayazu de moyi* (The swansong of the S'raya), Taipei: Qianwei, 1990.

while rejecting the Republican Government's ideology of unification with mainland China.²⁶

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

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

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

²⁶ Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*, pp. 3-4.

The image of the exotic lover

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

The teacher

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

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

²⁷ Film by Guangqi Company, cf. Wu Jinfa, *Wu Jinfa*, p. 327.

Migration into the cities

Since high school graduation Youma has been working as a kindergarten teacher for the Christian church. Youma lives in one of the 30 counties belonging to the reservation areas for aborigines in the central mountain regions of Taiwan. The Republican government has used such reservation areas to protect the aboriginal rights of land ownership by law and to ensure tax relief for their inhabitants.²⁸ When the narrator visits her village to research the role of alcohol in Atayal society, Youma remarks: 'In our village the young people have become fewer and fewer.'²⁹ A couple of years later the narrator meets Youma again in the metropolis. Youma too has left her native village for the city.

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

²⁸ Li Yiyuan, "On the Taiwan Aborigines", A Lecture delivered at the Institute for Chinese Studies, University of Oxford, 15th November, 1994, p. 24.

²⁹ Wu Jinfa, "You yueguang de he" (Moonlit river), in *Xiaoshi de nanxing* (The lost male), Taichung: Chenxing, 1981, pp. 155-176, p. 159.

³⁰ Liu Ao, "Zuihou de shuitian" (The last water field), in Wu Jinfa ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1989, pp. 63-68.

³¹ Yu Ronghui, "Hualian jinye youyu" (Tonight it is raining in Hualian), in Wu Jinfa ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1989, pp. 157-161, p. 159.

their livelihoods.³² The end of subsistence farming among aboriginal societies in the 1960s, low income due to their backward agricultural technology, the infertility of the soil in the mountains and a low level of education increased the economic gap between aborigines and Han citizens.³³ Life in the reservation areas exclusive for aborigines led to lack of both communication and exchange of technical know-how between Han and non-Han. Economic pressures caused by isolation and fraud count among the major reasons for the flight from the mountains.³⁴ By 1985, around 83,000 or one quarter of the mountain aborigines had moved to the capital Taipei and the industrial cities along the western coastal plains.³⁵ Youma represents the new minority of 'urban aborigines' who have migrated to the cities in search of a livelihood.

Prostitution

Youma however fails to find a better life in the city. Having graduated from high school, she is well educated by standards of ethnic minorities, but not in comparison to the Han population.³⁶ She follows in the footsteps of many other Atayal women, choosing prostitution for a livelihood. Today the majority of all Taiwanese prostitutes come from ethnic minorities. According to recent estimates, 30,000 indigenous women are involved in prostitution.³⁷ Around half of all women working in Huaxijie, the main pleasure quarters of Taipei, are aborigines.³⁸ Youma

³² Liu Huanyue, "Liulang de tudi youmu de minzu" (The land of the vagrant life and the nomadic ethnicity) in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1989, pp. 201-207.

³³ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 22.

³⁴ Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*, p. 60.

³⁵ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 23.

³⁶ In 1978, 6.51 per cent of the indigenous population graduated from senior high school as compared to 15 per cent of the total population of Taiwan (Li Yiyuan, "On the Taiwan Aborigines", p. 25; Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 23).

³⁷ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 6.

³⁸ Shen Meizhen, *Taiwan beihai changji yu changji zhengce* (Taiwan's battered prostitutes and the policy concerning prostitutes), Taipei: Qianwei, 1990, p. 111; Wang Xiurong, *Taiwan sichang zhi yanjiu* (Research on illegal prostitution in Taiwan) M.A. Thesis, Donghai University, 1984, p. 65.

presents a typical case: among all ethnic groups, the Atayal show the highest involvement in prostitution, accounting for seventy to eighty percent of all aboriginal prostitutes.³⁹ Field studies by the ethnologist Yu Guanghong from Academia Sinica found that women from more than one fifth of all Atayal households earn money by prostitution.⁴⁰

The Atayal however have no tradition of prostitution, as Yu Guanghong points out.⁴¹ Traditionally they were strictly monogamous.⁴² The moral and sexual education of youngsters consisted of clear-cut norms and taboos. Incest, adultery and pre-marital sexual relations were regarded as a deviation and a moral offence requiring penure.⁴³ Gender segregation started with puberty. Both girls and boys had to observe strict moral guidelines in their behaviour with the opposite sex and were exhorted to display modesty.⁴⁴ An old Atayal female shaman remembers the moral values of *traditional* society while deploring their loss in the modern world:

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

³⁹ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 46.

⁴⁰ Yu Guanghong, "Dongsaidake Taiyaren de liangxing guanxi" (Relations between the sexes in the Dongsaidake Atayal), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan minzuxue yanjiusuo jikan* 48, 1979, pp. 31-53.

⁴¹ Yu Guanghong, "Dongsaidake Taiyaren", 31-53.

⁴² Xu Muzhu and Li Yiyuan, "Shehui wenhua bianqian yu gaoshanzu qingshaonian wenti, yi Huanshan Taiyazu wei li de chubu yanjiu" (Social and cultural change and the problem of the indigenous youth, a preliminary survey taking the Atayal from Huanshan as an example), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan minzuxue yanjiusuo jikan* 24, 1978, pp. 281-297, p. 283.

⁴³ Li Yiyuan, "Nanao de Taiyazu, Minzuxue tianye diaocha yu yanjiu" (Report on ethnologic fieldwork and research on the Atayal from Nanao), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan minzuxue yanjiusuo zhuankan* 5, 1963, p. 80, and "Nanao de Taiyazu, Minzuxue tianye diaocha yu yanjiu", *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan minzuxue yanjiusuo zhuankan* 6, 1964, pp. 225-227; 256-267.

⁴⁴ Li Yiyuan, "Nanao de Taiyazu", p. 86.

but it was also necessary to do penitence and kill a pig for all to eat. When sexual relations were held secret, the result would be that one of the men of the same *gaga* [ritual group] would get injured while hunting.⁴⁵

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

Alcoholism

The disappearance of the *kutux gaga* and the disintegration of traditional family structures make it difficult for the modern-day Atayal individual to orientate him/herself on the values of his/her own ethnic group. The individual is left alone to cope with problems outside the

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 623. It was convention among the Atayal that men had the privilege of breaking into laughter before the women could join in; see Li Yiyuan, "Nanao de Taiyazu", p. 86.

⁴⁶ Xu Muzhu and Li Yiyuan, "Shehui wenhua bianqian", p. 289ff; Li Yiyuan, *Taiwan tuzhu minzu*, p. 432.

⁴⁷ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 67-68.

familiar social and cultural context.⁴⁸ As Youma tells the narrator during their first encounter in her native village: 'Our Atayal ancestors were fond of drink... We Atayal are still fond of drinking alcohol... However the reasons for drinking nowadays are no longer the same as in the past.'⁴⁹

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

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

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

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

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁹ Wu Jinfa, "You yueguang de he", p. 159.

⁵⁰ W. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch: Described from Contemporary Notes and a Bibliography of the Island*, Taipei: Ch'eng Wen, 1967, p. 11.

⁵¹ Laurence G. Thompson, "The earliest Eyewitness Accounts of the Formosan Aborigines", *Monumenta Serica*, 23, 1964, p. 193.

⁵² Laurence G. Thompson, "Formosan Aborigines in the Early Eighteenth Century: Huang Shu-ching's 'Fan-su liu-k'ao'", *Monumenta Serica*, 28, 1968, p. 87.

kind of entertainment tremendously. It is called *zuoxiang* ['village feast of wining and dining'].⁵³

The German travellers J. Thomson and P. Ibis who visited Taiwan in the 1870s described the indigenous peoples' fondness of wine as an innocent expression of joy.⁵⁴ The celebration of happiness however soon turned into havoc. Only two decades later Wu Guangliang remarked on the indigenous peoples' frequent rioting caused by wine: 'Intoxicated and inebriated, they boast of their strength and fights erupt. Such incidents occur with great frequency'. Chinese officials of the Qing dynasty reacted with Confucian consternation and a ban on drinking.⁵⁵ The German ethnographer Gudula Linck regards the process of sinicization on the Chinese frontiers as the uprooting and marginalization of traditional indigenous societies which resulted in the deterioration of morals and manners.⁵⁶

Nineteenth-century Western observers already perceived alcoholism as symbolizing the demise of traditional aboriginal societies. The British missionary W. Campbell wrote in 1889: 'The males among them are rapidly being slain by simple downright laziness and drink...'.⁵⁷ The Canadian missionary and medical doctor G. L. Mackay noted in 1895:

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

⁵³ Huang Fengchang, *Taiwan shengshoufan jishi* (Records of events concerning Taiwan's indigenous peoples from the mountains and plains), Taiwan wenxian congkan 51, Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiu shi, 1960, p. 41.

⁵⁴ J. Thomson, "Thomson's Reise auf Formosa" (Thomson's travels on Formosa), *Globus* 29, 1876, p. 339; P. Ibis, "Auf Formosa — Ethnographische Wanderungen" (On Formosa — ethnographic rambles), *Globus* 31, 1877, p. 185.

⁵⁵ Huang Fengchang, *Taiwan shengshoufan jishi*, p. 41.

⁵⁶ Gudula Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte*, pp. 289-290.

⁵⁷ W. Campbell, *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*, 2 vols., Taipei: Ch'eng Wen, 1972, p. 400.

liquors and corroding licentiousness have begun their havoc, and instead of strength and vigour, physical haggardness and wreckage are added to intellectual degradation and moral poverty.⁵⁸

Mackay already implies that social problems among the indigenous population, such as alcoholism, have been aggravated by virtue of contact with Chinese civilization.⁵⁹

More recently Liu Huanyue has also pointed out that, contrary to the widespread opinion that aborigines have an inborn predilection for intoxicating drinks, the consumption of alcohol used to be limited to festive occasions such as harvest festival, marriage ceremonies and worship of the spirits.⁶⁰ The Chinese journalist and writer Hong Tianjun (1951-) from Kaohsiung city states that the rate of alcoholism among aborigines has been soaring for the last few years and exceeds that among the Han Chinese.⁶¹ Nowadays alcoholism is wide-spread even among indigenous youths. Young men in particular engage in drinking bouts to prove their strength and courage.⁶² The story 'Jiali po' (The Indigenous Grandmother) by the nativist writer Zhong Lihe (1915-1960) depicts how the excessive consumption of alcohol changes the behaviour of the aborigines, turning them into a laughing-stock for the Chinese.⁶³ Alcoholism among the Atayal has also been described as the result of

⁵⁸ G.L. Mackay, *From Far Formosa: The Island, its People and Missions*, New York, repr. Taipei, 1968, p. 248.

⁵⁹ For similar views see also W. Joest, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Eingeborenen der Inseln Formosa und Ceram" (Contributions to the knowledge about indigenous peoples on the Isles of Formosa and Ceram), *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 1882, pp. 53-63, p. 55; cf. Gudula Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte*, p. 290.

⁶⁰ Liu Huanyue, "Liulang de tudi", pp. 212-213.

⁶¹ Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan" (The sun sets over endless mountains), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1989, p. 278.

⁶² Liu Huanyue, "Liulang de tudi", p. 213.

⁶³ Zhong Lihe, "Jiali po" (The indigenous grandmother), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Beiqing de Shanlin*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1987, pp. 7-8.

frustration and depression in a social context that prevents them from developing and realizing their traditional individual.⁶⁴

When the narrator meets Youma again in the city she has changed her name and identity. She aspires to live in mainstream society - the realm of the Han. Faced with the realities of life in the Chinese city, Youma tries to seek refuge in alcohol, submitting to the same fate as her brother and many other young Atayal. The narrator begins a love affair with her but fails to save her. She tries to forget her ethnic background and sever the links with her origins and traditions. When the narrator remarks, 'You no longer resemble an Atayal!', she replies: 'Let us not talk about the Atayal any longer'.⁶⁵ She begins to suffer from insomnia and a fear of the dark.

The German scholar Thomas Höllmann cites the following reasons for the wide-spread phenomenon of alcoholism among Taiwan's ethnic minorities: difficult working conditions in the mountain regions, lack of professional alternatives, unemployment, the feeling of powerlessness in front of the Chinese, loss of orientation, lack of norms and values for identification, and the absence of specific plans for the future— as Youma's case demonstrates.⁶⁶ The narrator questions her: 'What plans do you actually have for your future?' He can feel her startle as she replies with silence. Eventually she admits: 'I don't know'.⁶⁷ Her bouts of drinking become more frequent and serious. Several times the narrator has to collect her in a state of inebriation from the police quarters.⁶⁸ Youma's alcoholism also constitutes a form of self-destruction, signalling her alienation from her native tradition and the beginning of her mental and physical breakdown.

⁶⁴ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Wu Jinfa, "You yueguang de he", p. 166.

⁶⁶ Thomas Höllmann, *Die Tsou: Werden und Wandel einer ethnischen Minderheit in Zentraltaiwan* (The Tsou: origins and changes of an ethnic minority in central Taiwan), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982, p. 267.

⁶⁷ Wu Jinfa, "You yueguang de he", p. 168.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 169.

Christianity

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

I have used great diligence to learn their language, and from the outset to instruct them in the Christian faith; and I have succeeded so far that a fortnight before Christmas of the year 1628 there were a hundred and twenty-eight persons who knew the prayers and were able to answer in the most satisfactory manner with regard to the principal articles of our Christian faith.⁶⁹

For the indigenous peoples, conversion to Christianity became yet another reaction to Chinese invasion and sinicization. The Westerners and their religion seemed to offer salvation in their flight from the expansionist Chinese settlers.⁷⁰ Accounts by missionaries confirm this:

Shortly after this time work was opened up among the civilized Chinese-speaking aborigines... among the foothills. Here remarkable tribal movements took place. The people seemed to move towards the Gospel by whole villages rather than from personal conviction.⁷¹

The British custom officer W. A. Pickering reported in 1898: 'The Roman Catholics have made some progress amongst the Chinese, but their chief success has been with the civilized aborigines'.⁷² Three churches

⁶⁹ Campbell, *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*, p. 25.

⁷⁰ Gudula Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte*, pp. 299-303, 358-360.

⁷¹ Edward Band, *Barclay of Formosa*, Tokyo: Christian Literature Society, 1936, p. 25.

⁷² W.A. Pickering, *Pioneering in Formosa: Recollections of Adventures among Mandarins, Wreckers, and Head-hunting Savages*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1898, p. 78.

exist in Youma's village: one Catholic, one Protestant, and the 'Church of the True Christ' (*zhen Yesu jiaotang*), probably a church of Methodist origin, to which Youma professes herself. The Atayal, like other egalitarian aboriginal societies, would rather incline towards evangelistic sects while indigenous societies with hierarchic social structures would accept more readily the Catholic church.⁷³

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

The introduction of Christianity, the knowledge of modern science and the Republican government's attempts to eradicate superstition and shamanism led the Atayal to abandon their belief in supernatural powers (*rutux*) which previously had ensured social control and encouraged individual responsibility.⁷⁷ Without the power to influence ghosts, spirits and ancestors by means of prayer and sacrifice the individual feels helpless to avert fate which he/she perceives as dependent on environment or

⁷³ Li Yiyuan, "On the Taiwan Aborigines", p. 20.

⁷⁴ Hu Taili, "Yuan jia shandi lang" (I want to marry an indigenous man), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1989, pp. 257-271.

⁷⁵ Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", pp. 292-293.

⁷⁶ Wu Jinfa, "You yueguang de he", p. 162.

⁷⁷ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp.49-50. On *rutux* see Li Yiyuan, *Taiwan tuzhu minzu*, pp. 389-390.

destiny. The German scholar Michael Rudolph notes that the eradication of indigenous religions results in the peoples' loss of their dignity and self-esteem.⁷⁸ The pressures of her profession, the loss of self-esteem and the absence of a social group (the *kutux gaga*) or spiritual force (the *rutux*) to give guidance and solace lead to Youma's tragic end.

Suicide

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

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

⁷⁸ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 78-85.

⁷⁹ Wu Jinfa, "You yueguang de he", p. 170.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 165.

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 157.

The singer

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

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

New attitudes in modern Taiwanese society make poverty appear as shameful, but not so the loss of human dignity through prostitution (*xiao pin bu xiao chang*).⁸² Female promiscuity such as prostitution was traditionally despised by both Han and traditional non-Han societies but seems to have gained a certain acceptability as a means of livelihood in modern Taiwan.⁸³ Eighty percent of Taiwan's indigenous prostitutes choose their profession voluntarily.⁸⁴ As most prostitutes come from financially stable households, poverty alone does not appear as the main reason for their choice of livelihood. An increasing desire for luxury and also loneliness have emerged as the major driving forces.⁸⁵ Youma chooses the company of affluent men in society who provide her with a higher standard of living. As the company director's mistress, Youma enjoys the privilege of living in an elegant urban residence.

⁸² Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 35

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 68. On Han attitudes see Sue Gronewold, *Beautiful Merchandise: Prostitution in China 1860-1936*, New York: Haworth, 1982, pp. 31-32.

⁸⁴ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 6, n. 20.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 129.

Prostitution here appears as a means of social mobility. According to the scholar Bernard Wolfe who carried out research on prostitution in Taiwan in the 1970s, many indigenous girls were primarily motivated by the desire for social mobility when they moved to the cities to marry retired mainland Chinese soldiers or to go into prostitution.⁸⁶ In a condition of permanent inferiority, the rise to a higher social status by material affluence must have appeared as a desirable goal to many indigenous women. They might have seen it as the only chance to overcome their inferior status. Many were willing to pay a high price: the renunciation of their own ethnic and cultural identity⁸⁷ and/or the way into.⁸⁸

With the demise of the *kutux gaga* and the *rutux*, the breaking of sexual taboos no longer entails social sanctions or supernatural retribution among the Atayal.⁸⁹ Prostitution appears as one way of attaining consumer goods and other material attractions. The ethnologist Li Yiyuan deplores in his studies of the Atayal their consumer orientation:

The worst consequence [of prostitution] is the degeneration of moral standards and the loss of any feeling of shame. Many young women become able to make a lot of money and to run around proud and made up like a pheasant. Parents are proud of their daughter, because she promises a "great future". Neighbours and friends look on with admiration. There are even husbands who allow their wives to act as prostitutes with the attitude that their money will fulfill all their wishes.⁹⁰

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

⁸⁶ Bernard Wolfe, *The Daily Life of a Chinese Courtesan Climbing up a Tricky Ladder: with a Chinese Courtesan's Dictionary*, Hong Kong: Learner's Bookstore, 1980, p. 89.

⁸⁷ George de Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation", in George de Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, eds., *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 26f.

⁸⁸ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 81.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 67

⁹⁰ Li Yiyuan, *Taiwan tuzhu minzu*, pp. 449-450

earlier story and for the Saisiat protagonist suggests to the reader that similar issues are at stake in both cases. As members of Taiwan's indigenous minority, Youma the Atayal and Youma the Saisiat would share similar experiences in their encounter with Han society.

By creating a 'world of make-believe', Youma the Saisiat can get the illusion of gaining status and recognition through her individual capacities. Here Youma manifests the kind of 'avoidance behaviour' described by E. F. Frazier in his study of black American minority groups as one reaction to discrimination.⁹¹ Instead of avoiding contact with the dominating group, i.e. Han society, Youma places values attributed only secondary or marginal importance by the dominating group top of her world of make-believe. By fulfilling goals that are within her easy reach, she can avoid the feeling of failure. This way of coping also has a close affinity to 'status acceptance'⁹²: in coming to accept her inferior social status, Youma can bear an inferior or despicable role in society.

In Taiwan Chinese men have been known to take mistresses from the indigenous peoples for centuries. As the *Fansu zaji* states: 'They [i.e. Chinese men] take barbarian girls as wives or mistresses while the barbarian men become old without ever having been married'.⁹³ To prevent intermarriages, the Chinese authorities issued a ban in 1736 which was again lifted in 1875 as it had been largely ineffective.⁹⁴ In the nineteenth century W. Joest reported on the indigenous women's willingness to marry Chinese men: 'Die Mädchen heiraten gerne Chinesen, trotzdem sie von ihren einheimischen Männern durchaus nicht schlecht behandelt werden' (The girls like marrying Chinese men although the

⁹¹ Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, New York: Macmillan, 1957.

⁹² George Eaton Simpson and J. Milton Yinger, *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*, New York: Harper and Row, 1985, p. 150f.

⁹³ Wen Ji, *Taiwan fanzheng zhi* (Record of administrating Taiwan's indigenous peoples), vol. 2, Taipei: Taiwansheng wenxian weiyuanhui, 1957, p. 569.

⁹⁴ Dai Yanhui, "Qingdai Taiwan xiangzhuang shehui dekaocha" (An investigation into Taiwan's rural society in the Qing era), *Taiwan yinhang jikan* 14, 4, 1963, p. 356; Wen Ji, *Taiwan fanzheng zhi*, p. 571; Gudula Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte*, p. 195 and 289.

indigenous men do not treat them badly at all).⁹⁵ At the turn of the twentieth century Campbell also noted about the indigenous population: 'the neighbouring Chinese always succeed in carrying off their best-looking daughters'.⁹⁶

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

In several points of morality these mountain savage will compare favourably with other and higher races. Like their nearest kin, the Hill Dyaks of Borneo, whom they resemble with significant closeness in most of their distinctive features of character and in their customs and habits of life, they are truthful and honest to a remarkable degree; and gross immorality, when found among them, is nearly always traceable to border-land association with the Chinese.⁹⁷

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

Youma the Saisiat appears as the morally loose woman who challenges the narrator and other Han men to seduce her.⁹⁸ But her behaviour only masks an underlying feeling of loneliness: 'Lonely, yes, all Saisiat are lonely'.⁹⁹ As for many indigenous women on Taiwan, she chooses prostitution as one way to combat her loneliness.

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

⁹⁵ W. Joest, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Eingeborenen", p. 61.

⁹⁶ Campbell, *An Account of the Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*, p. 400.

⁹⁷ Mackay, *From Far Formosa*, p. 268.

⁹⁸ Wu Jinfa, "Yanming de jiedao" (The path of the swallows), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Beiqing de shanlin*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1983, pp. 271-292, pp. 274-275, 285, 290.

⁹⁹ Wu Jinfa, "Yanming de jiedao", p. 282.

about her husband's philandering.¹⁰⁰ Later the film director beats her when she resists his attempts at rape. She has become nothing but a commodity in the eyes of Chinese men, as the film director asserts: 'This barbarian bitch was originally my booty!'.¹⁰¹ The indigenous woman here appears reduced to a sexual object. Youma's story illuminates the darker corners of Han chauvinism.

As in the first story of Youma the Atayal, melancholy characterises the life of the indigenous heroine. Youma the Saisiat is happy within her native environment but lapses into melancholy upon her return to the city and Han-dominated society. Her story however has a happy ending. Youma plays out the possibility of what happens when she gives in to the narrator's desire for a relationship. Wu rescues her from the fangs of the film director and becomes her partner. The solution here too means Youma's embrace of Chinese civilization. But what distinguishes Wu from her previous Chinese lovers is his sympathetic understanding of her situation and his desire to form a serious partnership built on love, not exploitation. His union with Youma thus ultimately succeeds in eliminating her feeling of loneliness. He embraces her 'as if embracing all lonely Saisiat'.¹⁰² The story celebrates the sympathetic union of Han and non-Han as one solution to the perceived problem of discrimination.

The actress

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

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 283-284.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 289.

¹⁰² *ibid.* p. 292.

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

The Han men Maya meets are only interested in her exotic allure and she even suffers attempted rape at the hands of her father-in-law. Although she is an innocent victim, her husband abuses her when he hears about it.¹⁰³

Her story pinpoints the ambiguity of Chinese attitudes towards the indigenous population, containing both contempt and desire.¹⁰⁴ This ambiguity can be traced back to the days of the Qing dynasty. The Chinese settlers voiced their disgust at the perceived uncouthness of the 'barbarians', e.g. their nudity, their promiscuity, their breaking the taboo on incest and the custom of head-hunting.¹⁰⁵ To Chinese minds, the aborigines resembled animals: 'They live in holes in the earth, are of limited intelligence and wild disposition, and hardly differ from birds and animals'.¹⁰⁶ Chinese sources stress the lack of civilization among the indigenous peoples:

Both men and women all go naked or wear clothes made from bound pieces of deer fur and leaves. They drink blood, eat hair and devour everything raw. Their character is wild and cruel and they are devoted to killing.¹⁰⁷

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

¹⁰³ Wu Jinfa, "Anye de wu" (Fog as dark as night), in *Chunqiu chashi*, Taipei: Lianhe wenxue, 1988, repr., 1990, pp. 77-96, pp. 92-93.

¹⁰⁴ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 70ff; p. 108ff.

¹⁰⁵ Huang Fengchang, *Taiwan shengshoufan jishi*, pp. 45-51; G. Linck-Kesting, *Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte*, pp. 280-282, 308.

¹⁰⁶ "Qingji shenbao Taiwan jishi jilu" (Collected articles from the *Shenbao* on Taiwan during the Qing Dynasty), *Wenxuan congkan* 247, 1968, p. 47.

¹⁰⁷ "Qingyi tongzhi Taiwanfu" (Recordings from Taiwan Prefecture during the unified Qing dynasty), *Wenxuan congkan* 68, 1842, p. 47.

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

Strange indeed are the Eastern Barbarians! ... And then, that there should be people who do not know the days and months, who are without officials and directors, who go naked and use the quipu - is this not also strange? Moreover they ... live mixed up together, males and females, but are not licentious; the males and females [freely] exchange positions [in their society]; ... to the present day they are completely without the calendar and writing - how strange indeed! The Southern and Northern Barbarians¹⁰⁸ all have writing, like the ancient chuan "bird-tracks" [script of China]; one presumes at the beginning there were wise men who invented it. Why should this [place] alone have been lacking [such wise men]? But [these Eastern Barbarians,] when they have eaten to the full and are enjoying themselves, contented and happy, what need have they for wise men? They are [carefree] people of [the ages of the ancient mythological emperors] Wuhuai and Getian!¹⁰⁹

The Chinese merchant Yu Yonghe included in his travel account *Pihai jiyou* ('Small Sea Travel Journal') in 1697 the following observations about Taiwan's indigenous peoples:

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

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

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

¹⁰⁸ i.e. Japanese and Manchus.

¹⁰⁹ Laurence G. Thompson, "The Earliest Eyewitness Accounts", p. 177 (Romanization adapted by the author).

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 189.

¹¹¹ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 110ff.

image of the 'noble savage', the Han Chinese discrimination against the indigenous minorities can be regarded as a process of self-definition by negation. It can be seen as a search for identity in times of social and cultural tensions while lacking any other more convincing criteria for self-identification. In such situations the desire arises to give dignity to one's own mode of being by contrasting it to those of other, different groups of people.¹¹² Rudolph suggests that the Han inhabitants of Taiwan have displayed an ambiguous attitude towards their own identity. The indigenous non-Han population was the most obvious target for differentiation. Although the Guomindang government tried to perpetuate the myth of both Han and non-Han citizens of the Republic of China as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor¹¹³, the differences between the Han and Taiwan's indigenous peoples remained obvious in their physical appearance.¹¹⁴ Maya also perceives this as the root of the problem: "Just because of the way I look, all men in the world only want to get me into bed the moment they see me, not one of them can see my mind, they only want to look at my breasts, my buttocks, and my legs - I am a natural source of trouble!"¹¹⁵

Like Youma the Saisiat, she responds to Han stereotypes about indigenous women by complying with them. As she fails to gain respect, love and understanding, she takes on the role of the seductress that Han men expect her to play. Rudolph has pointed out that Han perceptions of moral looseness among the indigenous peoples go hand in hand with the idea of the indigenous woman as a physical superwoman.¹¹⁶ Maya

¹¹² Hayden White, *Auch Klio dichtet oder die Fiktion des Faktischen: Studien zur Tropologie des historischen Diskurses* (Klio, too, writes poetry or the fiction of the factual: studies on the tropology of historical discourse), Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986, pp. 177-231, esp. 179; George de Vos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 330.

¹¹³ "Shei shi 'Yan Huang zisun'? Taiwan de yuanzhumin cong he er lai?" (Who are the descendants of the Yellow Emperor? Where do the indigenous peoples of Taiwan come from?), *Yuanzhumin zhi sheng*, 1, 1987, pp. 5-13.

¹¹⁴ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 112.

¹¹⁵ Wu Jinfa, "Anye de wu", pp. 93-94.

¹¹⁶ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 114.

attempts to find fulfilment in love but is eventually driven to fulfil the expectations imposed on her by Han society.

Negative stereotypes still dominate Chinese perceptions of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan. In the 1980s indigenous students professed in interviews that Han people regard them as living an inferior lifestyle, being stupid and backward, having a well developed body but low intelligence, lacking knowledge and understanding, and not much differing from animals.¹¹⁷ A survey among the Han Chinese showed that they were aware of the physical differences. They noted characteristics such as 'big eyes', 'sharp features', 'black skin', and 'strong built'. They perceived the behaviour of the indigenous peoples as characterized by excessive drinking habits, low standard of living and low levels of education, laziness, simplicity, modesty and passion. All Han Chinese people in the survey agreed that members of the indigenous population were best suited for jobs that would make use of their talents in singing and dancing. Both Youma the Saisiat and Maya represent typical professions of members of indigenous groups. Scholars have noted that this type of discrimination which attributes certain occupations as suitable and others as unsuitable to members of indigenous groups is reflected in the national statistics on job distribution and income.¹¹⁸

Despite the negative stereotypes about the indigenous peoples' appearance and behaviour, Han Chinese people also feel a certain attraction to the simplicity and independence of the 'savages'. The indigenous peoples also represent Han Chinese dreams of freedom from social obligations and the pressures of civilization.¹¹⁹ This too forms part of Maya's attraction.

Maya's exotic looks moreover correspond to current ideals of beauty in modern Taiwanese mainstream society which have changed in recent decades under the influence of the West. Han Chinese women often

¹¹⁷ For a report on Xie Shizhong's survey in 1987 see Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 70-75.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 112. Compare Wagatsuma's findings for Japanese attitudes towards the Ainu minority, Wagatsuma, 1975.

resort to operations to enlarge their eyes.¹²⁰ Bernard Wolfe notes the sexual attraction of the indigenous women's naturally big eyes on Taiwanese men.¹²¹ Han society perceives both Ami and Atayal women as specially attractive because of their tall build and fair skin.¹²² Han men also appreciate the indigenous prostitutes' talents of singing and dancing which are rare in most Han prostitutes.¹²³ In all these respects, Maya can deliver.

The narrator of this story embodies a perceived image of the average Han man on modern Taiwan who would fancy a fling with an indigenous woman. It has been suggested that Han men's fantasizes about the promiscuity of indigenous women may be a sublimation of the idyll of unrestrained consumption, or its alternative, the destruction of what cannot be consumed.¹²⁴ Rudolph even speaks of a Han fetishism for indigenous women and calls prostitution the badly masked rape of young indigenous women and the climax of Chinese exploitation of the indigenous peoples.¹²⁵ Maya embodies the strange brand of disgust and desire in the contact of Han people with their border cultures.

The child-courtesan

In 1988 Wu Jinfa published the medium-length story 'Chunqiu chashi' ('The Teahouse "Spring and Autumn"') with another Atayal heroine. The story received the first literary award from the magazine *Lianhe wenxue* and appeared in a film version in 1989. Longer than Wu Jinfa's previous stories about indigenous characters and a precursor to his first full-blown novel *Qiuju* (Chrysanthemum) (first published in 1989) about love and youth in rural Taiwan, it is a novel about growing up,¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Wolfe, *The Daily Life of a Chinese Courtesan*, p. 111.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 101, 111, 125.

¹²² Hsu Mutsu (Xu Muzhu), "Ethnic Identity and Intercultural Relations in Taiwan", in David Y.H. Wu, ed., *Ethnicity and Interpersonal Interaction: A Cross-cultural Study*, Hong Kong: Maruzen Asia, 1982, p. 206.

¹²³ Wolfe, *The Daily Life of a Chinese Courtesan*, p. 104.

¹²⁴ White, *Auch Klio dichtet*, p. 223; Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 114.

¹²⁵ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 112, 125.

¹²⁶ Wu Jinfa, *Wu Jinfa*, Taipei: Qianwei, 1992, p. 310.

appearing as a modern Taiwanese nativist version of the Ming (1368-1644)/Qing (1644-1911) dynasty novels about the pangs of adolescence such as the seventeenth-century novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* and the eighteenth-century *Honglou meng*.

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

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

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

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

¹²⁷ Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*, pp. 59-64.

¹²⁸ Liu Huanyue, "Liulang de tudi", p. 211.

¹²⁹ Yu Ronghui, "Hualian jinye youyu", pp. 157-158.

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

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

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

¹³⁰ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 1-6; Tao Youchun and Chen Ping, "Rang lüdeghu liang hongdeng" (Let the houses with green lamps illuminate the red light), *Shibao zhoubao* 18, 1987; "Shenru quansheng zui da renkou fanmaichang tanfang" (A thorough investigation into the biggest market in human trade in the whole province), *Feicui* (shuangzhoukan) 30th June, 1988, pp. 29-33; Zhang Guoli, "Xianzai, ting chujie zenme shuo" (Now listen to what the child prostitutes have to say), *Shibao zhoubao*, 17th January, 1988, pp. 20-30.

¹³¹ Yang Du "Shancun biji" (Notes on mountain villages), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, pp. 181-197, p. 191.

¹³² Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", p. 280; Liu Huanyue, "Liulang de tudi", p. 211.

¹³³ Shen Meizhen, *Taiwan beihai changji*, p. 22; Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*, p. 62; Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", p. 280.

among the prostitutes.¹³⁴ Minors could not leave the brothels without their bodyguards and when Chen Meili does so, she receives corporal punishment. Many girls have to work ten to fifteen hours a day.¹³⁵

Chen Meili's case is no exception. The support agency for indigenous prostitutes Rainbow Project conducted a survey of the brothels in Huaxijie in 1985 which showed that the Atayal have a particularly high proportion of prostitutes under the age of 18.¹³⁶ Sixty-three percent of the prostitutes interviewed by Rainbow Project, most of them Atayal, had come into prostitution as minors.¹³⁷ Rainbow Project found that the youngest indigenous girls were the most desired. They had to deal with thirty to forty clients every day but most of them could keep only a small percentage of their income as pocket money.¹³⁸ According to the statistics of the women's education institution in Nantou, the youngest indigenous girl was eight years old, six were under twelve, twenty-seven were thirteen, fifty-seven were fourteen, and over three thousand were between fifteen and twenty-two.¹³⁹ After two years most girls remain in the profession because even if they have received a simple manual training in reintegration institutions, they find only badly paid jobs and therefore return to prostitution.¹⁴⁰

Hong Tianjun also points out that most girls come into the profession due to the bad financial situation of their parents or due to fraud by slave traders who originally have promised other jobs to the girls and their parents.¹⁴¹ Interviews conducted for *Renjian* magazine also showed that most parents who had sold their children were the victims of fraud.

¹³⁴ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 5.

¹³⁵ Wang Xiurong, *Taiwan sichang zhi yanjiu*, p. 75.

¹³⁶ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 128.

¹³⁷ Wang Xiurong, *Taiwan sichang zhi yanjiu*, p. 65.

¹³⁸ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 130-136.

¹³⁹ Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", p. 280. Liu Huanyue also mentions that the ratio of indigenous and Chinese child prostitutes is 7:3. They have to serve 11 to 12 men a day; see Liu Huanyue, "Liulang de tudi", p. 214.

¹⁴⁰ Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", pp. 283-284; Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*, p. 62.

¹⁴¹ Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", p. 284.

Often they had been deceived by dignified persons from their own ranks such as indigenous members of parliament or teachers. In order not to arouse suspicion many slave traders promise those heads of family who insist on their honour only small amounts of money for arranging a job for their daughters.¹⁴² Chen Meili's story appears as a classic case study. By dramatizing her fate, Wu Jinfa appears among the first writers to anchor the image of the indigenous child-courtesan in the public imagination, offering it as part of modern-day Taiwanese consciousness.

Other writers in Wu Jinfa's literary circle have also begun to focus on similar issues. The Chinese author Lin Wenyi (1953-) from Taipei city tells how he met a brother and sister from an indigenous tribe near a mining area playing alone in the streets. When Lin asked them about their parents, the boy started to cry and the girl said that the father worked in the coal mine while their mother was in Taipei.¹⁴³

In the story 'Biyuecun yishi' (Memoirs from Biyue village) by the Taiwanese writer Gu Mengren (alias Lin Riyang, 1951-) from Yunlin, an elderly member of the indigenous peoples offers his help to a Chinese man in procuring an indigenous girl for him. 'Our girls are really pretty. I'm sure you'll like them!' he enthuses.¹⁴⁴ When the Chinese man leaves, the old man regrets that it did not work this time.¹⁴⁵

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

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

¹⁴² Zeng Shumei, "Chuji nuli yutian lu — Taiwan chujie de xuelei zhengyan" (Record of the child prostitutes' and slaves' cry to heaven — the testimony of Taiwanese child prostitutes' blood and tears), *Renjian*, 3, 1987, pp. 8-23.

¹⁴³ Lin Wenyi, "Gudu de shandi" (The lonely mountain regions), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Yuan jia shandi lang*, Taichung: Chenxing, pp. 233-238, p. 237.

¹⁴⁴ Gu Mengren, "Biyuecun yishi" (Memoirs from Biyue village), in Wu Jinfa, ed., *Beiqing de shanlin*, Taichung: Chenxing, 1987, pp. 193-261, p. 204.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 234.

Our daughters have to entertain clients
Imprisoned in dark rooms, narrow chambers, underground
chambers...

It is not likely that you don't know
One deal for three hundred Yuan

...

Our daughters have to entertain clients
Contracting cervicitis, peritonitis and other venereal diseases

...

Our daughters are perhaps thirteen years old
The age when one should be studying and playing
Our daughters may be eighteen years old
The age when one should be roaming about and dreaming...¹⁴⁶

In his prosaic words Walisi Yougan leaves the reader no escape from the harsh reality of the Atayal child courtesans, speaking in a voice even more direct and shocking than that of Wu Jinfa.

These stories shed light on the economic and political dependence of Taiwan's non-Han people on mainstream Chinese society. Jiang Xun, the Taiwanese editor-in-chief of the journal *Nanfang*, accuses the 'feudal and patriarchal social system' and modern capitalist ideology and practice for the 'excesses of the sex industry' in Taiwan.¹⁴⁷ Jiang Xun holds the culture of mass consumption responsible for the exploitation of Taiwan's rural and indigenous population, in particular since the industrial developments of the 1960s. Indigenous women became the cheapest commodities and the 'modern slaves of industrial society' which gave them no other means for competition.¹⁴⁸ Both the slave trade and prostitution have a long history in Taiwan, dating back to the seventeenth century when the first Chinese settlers arrived from the mainland. As

¹⁴⁶ Walisi Yougan, *Xiangnian Zuren* (Thinking of my people), Taichung: Chenxing, 1994, pp. 158-160.

¹⁴⁷ Jiang Xun, "Fuquan zaizhi xia de renkou shichang, Taiwan seqing chanye de zhengzhi jingji fenxi" (Political and economic analysis of the sex industry in Taiwan and human trade under the patriarchal system), *Nanfang* 7, 1987, p. 10; Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 37-41.

¹⁴⁸ Jiang Xun, "Fuquan zaizhi", p. 14.

Taipei gained importance as a port city in the nineteenth century, prostitution began to flourish.¹⁴⁹ The new settlers also brought with them the *yangnü* slavery system of 'adopted daughters' which was widely practised during the Qing dynasty.¹⁵⁰

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

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

¹⁴⁵ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 87ff.

¹⁵⁰ Arthur P. Wolf and Huang Chieh-shan, *Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980, p. 115; Sue Gronewold, *Beautiful Merchandise: Prostitution in China 1860-1936*, New York: Haworth, 1982, p. 34.

¹⁵¹ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp.138-139.

¹⁵² *Lifayuangongbao* (Reports and information from the Legislative Yuan), 76.54, 1987, p. 91.

¹⁵³ Wu Jinfa, "Chungju chashi", in Wu Jinfa, *Chungju chashi*, Taipei: Lianhe wenxue, 1988, repr. 1990, p. 116.

¹⁵⁴ "Tuanjie qilai jie jue chuji wenti" (Unite to solve the problem of child prostitution), *Funü xinzhi*, 2 1987, pp. 4-8; Rudolph, *Prostitution*, pp. 133-137.

Concluding remarks

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

Wu Jinfa belongs among the first Chinese writers from Taiwan to break the taboo on the theme of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan's Chinese-medium literature. In the 1980s his love stories between Han men and non-Han women, his involvement in matters concerning Taiwan's indigenous peoples and his systematic critique of mainstream attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Chinese society appeared as highly subversive. As Wu Jinfa proclaimed during an interview with the author in August 1996, the secret police would be right there to eavesdrop every time he arranged literary meetings and discussion groups concerning the indigenous minorities in the 1980s - a phenomenon hard to imagine in the 1990s as the issue of the indigenous peoples has become a popular and politically correct topic.¹⁵⁵ His fictional themes form part of the political agenda of many Taiwanese intellectuals in the late 1980s when the democratization and liberalization movement gathered momentum, riding the tide of interest in the indigenous peoples and their cultures as part of the path towards democracy and appearing in the wake of a movement for Taiwanese independence.

Wu Jinfa criticizes mainstream Chinese society as sporting too much 'Han chauvinism' and questions the current sinocentric value system. He stresses the importance of looking at the world from the point of view of the indigenous peoples and suppressed minorities.¹⁵⁶ He advocates as the solution for the problems of the indigenous peoples in

¹⁵⁵ D. Berg, interview with Wu Jinfa, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, 11 August 1996.

¹⁵⁶ Wu Jinfa, *Zuo yige xin Taiwanren*, p. 347.

modern-day Taiwan a stronger emphasis on 'humanitarianism and compassion'¹⁵⁷ while also appealing to his fellow citizens' innate consciousness (*liangxin*).¹⁵⁸ Ironically, his rhetoric in his critique of Chinese culture appears as thoroughly Confucian.

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

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

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

¹⁵⁷ Wu Jinfa, *Yuan jia shandi lang*, pp. 318-319.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Glen Dudbridge, *China's Vernacular Cultures: An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 1st June, 1995*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

¹⁶⁰ Rudolph, *Prostitution*, p. 109.

has emerged during the 1990s, both by Chinese and indigenous writers. Indigenous women, too, now make their voices heard for the first time in the Chinese-medium literature of Taiwan, such as the Paiwan woman writer Ligelale Awu (1969-).¹⁶¹ Their contributions are changing the face of Taiwanese literature, creating a new, multicultural identity and consciousness.

While the theme has caught on, Wu Jinfa however seems to have lost interest in the indigenous peoples as a topic of his fictional narratives. During an interview with the author in August 1996, Wu Jinfa implied that this issue had lost its topical importance and political sensitivity. He has instead turned his attention to poetry modelled on Japanese haiku writings. Nature and the elements, such as the stars and the sky, but also the fairytales of the indigenous peoples still continue to provide him with inspiration, he claims, for the subject-matter of his verses. Wu Jinfa's last publication to deal with an indigenous theme was a diary of the indigenous dance troupe *Yuanwuzhe* (The Original Dancers) published in 1993.¹⁶² If there is also an element of disappointment over the lack of recognition of his support among the indigenous peoples, he does not show it.

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

¹⁶² Wu Jinfa, *Yuanwuzhe* (The original dancers), Taichung: Chenxing, 1993.