

Asia-Pacific Social and Cultural Regional Integration: Taiwan Connecting Peoples of Austronesian Languages¹

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Abstract

As we are engaging in the Asia-Pacific, the position of Taiwan as an early linguistic factor in the dispersal of languages is important to observe. The region is seeking collaboration and partnership with its associates of heritage.

Taiwan from Neolithic prehistory has ushered in the Austronesian languages that became about 1,200 in number spreading across ocean settlements. For most of the region of Island Southeast Asia and Oceania, the Austronesian speaking peoples have prevailed for several thousand years, extending from archaic origins, with examples found in Formosan languages, through the Malayo-Polynesian languages of the islands of Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Micronesia, Melanesia to Polynesia, and across the Indian Ocean to Madagascar. These languages are valuable, regardless of their extent, influence, or number of speakers, as part of the basic richness of humanity – a far-reaching legacy of communication and worldviews.

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This paper explores the concept of Taiwan and Austronesia as “island connectivity” in the arena of Asia-Pacific – positioning Formosan languages and cultures as valuable tools in providing cultural, political, and economic associations across its geographic width and breadth for peaceful development.



Keywords: Asia-Pacific, Taiwan, Austronesia, Formosan languages, heritage connections, linkages of peoples

Introduction

Asia-Pacific regional integration is expressed here as a peaceful process based on cross-cultural understanding reaching out among peoples of common language vehicles. As Austronesian-speaking peoples are engaging in the Asia-

Pacific region, the position of Taiwan as an early linguistic factor in the dispersal of languages is important to observe. Taiwan from prehistory has ushered Austronesian languages linking across Pacific settlements. Inhabiting Oceania began from the Western Pacific and proceeded outwards in a series of expansion pulses and settlement pauses.

Taiwan is harnessing its Austronesian heritage to foster peaceful alliances in the Asia-Pacific region and reduce international political isolation (Crocombe 1999 a, b) by the People's Republic of China (PRC). From 2002 Austronesian forums were inaugurated in Taipei, Republic of China (ROC), Taiwan, for enhancing cooperation among Austronesian-speaking countries including official diplomatic representation from the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Nauru, Marshall Islands, and Palau.³

These new associations are based on almost forgotten old connections based on far-reaching Pacific linguistic origins. Austronesian speakers developed their languages in Taiwan from around 5,200 years ago, where they paused for a nearly thousand years before circulating a "lingua franca" in the Philippines about 4,500 years ago, and then spread further south to Indonesia and Malaysia – and then moving out eastward over the next thousand years. After settling Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, the Austronesian speakers paused again for another thousand years, before finally spreading further into Polynesia eventually reaching the Eastern Pacific.⁴

³ In 2002 – Taipei's Declaration of Austronesian Leaders, in 2003 – Forum of Austronesian Cooperation and Exchange, in 2007 – Austronesian Forum established in Taiwan to "share opinions and research on indigenous wisdom" and rights as a platform for understanding Austronesian speakers in terms of their "political, social, economic and cultural development" for building "a compact and orderly network to enhance the world's awareness and respect of indigenous people." In my opinion there is a problem with using the term "Austronesian" when referring to "Leaders" and "Cooperation" as it refers to a language family, not to be used otherwise. See, http://heasc.he.fju.edu.tw/index_en.htm ⁴ See Fox and Sather 1996; Bellwood 1997, 1999).

Conceptualizing Taiwan in Austronesia

Taiwan became conceptualized as an island from maps charted by the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, French, British, Japanese, and Americans. These maps include the island called Formosa (Portuguese and Dutch) – or Hermosa in Spanish – from the 16th century – sometimes just a chart of the island – and at other times in the context of the Asia-Pacific region. Ming and Qing maps of Imperial China illustrate the island as an archipelago in watercolor and ink of sweeping majestic green-blue mountains spewing waterfalls down to circular bays and river mouths. Port names were given for voyage destinations, such as Sin-kang (near Tainan in the south), Lu-kang in the center, and Tamsui in the north – facing Fujian across the Taiwan Strait. The Eastside of the mountainous archipelago showed clouds merging with airy space. Later the island's East Coast was mapped by circumnavigating European cartographers. And Formosan islands (usually three) – with the Tropic of Cancer running through it – *became one*. Taiwan was conceptualized as destinations and peoples, "raw" and "cooked." The raw people were the "headhunting savages" who were trading, yet elusive in the island's Central Range, East Coast, and Orchid Island. Those cooked people were Sinicized through association, intermarriage, or acculturation with people from Fujian or other parts of China, such as the Hakka. They remained on the Westside plains to cultivate and/or trade for forest products like deer hides and camphor wood. A Westside north-south "blue or red line of control" demarcated boundaries of which the semi-raw mixed with the semi-cooked peoples.

Fujian Province reached to the island's line of control – as the Emperor of China ruled only taxable or tribute bearing peoples. To the east of the boundary – people were deemed strange, unruly, and not worthy of the empire. Mainland Fujian itself was considered a mountainous hinterland province bordering a dangerous sea – and access to Taiwan meant crossing the rough domain of pirates to a marshy coasts.⁵ From 1683 to 1885 the Qing ruled part of Taiwan as prefecture of Fujian, and then under Governor Liu Ming-chuan it became a province – yet, raw peoples continued with their own sovereignty until the Japanese arrived from 1895 into the early 20th century. Ending the First Sino-Japanese

War, the Treaty of Shimonoseki gave Korea its independence from tribute to China and allowed Imperial Japan to occupy Peng-hu Islands and the Taiwan “civil society” Westside without formal Chinese interference,

⁵ Qing Emperor Kang Hsi at the time commented: Taiwan is a “trifling place -taking it adds nothing and abandoning it is no loss.”

Although local people defended their homes – and the remaining savage Eastside remained open to Japanese military discretion.⁶ For Japan, Taiwan was eventually subdued with modern mechanized warfare – to combine the raw with the cooked into one – not a as destination archipelago – *one island* for the first time was conceived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁷

Confusions

Modern China lays claim to Taiwan – it’s in the constitution of the PRC stating that 56 ethnic minority nationalities are in the realm of the republic – including peoples of Taiwan as Gaoshan (high mountain) peoples. These are Austronesian speakers – not specifically to do with mountains, just a collective gloss for Taiwan indigenous peoples and the Yami (Tao) of Orchid Island.

To confuse matters, former ROC Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said ... “Aborigines in Taiwan are a branch of the Austronesian family. Studies by various academics even conclude that Taiwan may be the place where all Austronesian peoples originated.” Council of Indigenous Peoples Minister Icyang Parod stated, “We will also seek to register Taiwan as the origin of Austronesian peoples with UNESCO.”⁸ Another Council representative told me that on his Australian trip – he told local people about their origin place. He asked me why they looked confused, and why they didn’t know they came from Taiwan. I replied Australian Aborigines migrated to their continent across the Sunda Sub-continent of Southeast Asia about 60,000 years. They were a Paleolithic culture. Later Paleolithic peoples also settled in Taiwan before it was an island about 30,000 years ago (Sung 1969, 1989). Proto-Austronesian speakers of post-Ice Age Neolithic cultures voyaged by sea via Peng-hu Islands and settled in Taiwan from 6,500 years ago.⁹

Is there a connection between Australian Aborigines and Formosan indigenous peoples? Both Australia and Austronesia seem to be similar words. Yes – that’s true, yet nothing to do with the people. Australia and Austronesia derived from Latin

⁶ Treaty of Shimonoseki (Letter of Imperial Peace) of 1895 states Japanese sovereignty over the Formosa archipelago would not be disputed by China, or any other state, over the next 50 years.⁷ For the past hundred years of Taiwan history, see Huang *et al.* 1997. ⁸ See, *Heritage* 2007 Will UNESCO register Taiwan as the origin of Austronesian peoples?

http://www.nowpublic.com/will_unesco_register_taiwan_origin_austronesian_peoples See Rolett *et al.* 2000.

austrālis “southern wind” and for Austronesia with the Greek *νήσος* (*nēsos*) “islands” making for “southern-sea islands.”

Language Family and Taiwan Groups

The Austronesian Language Family is the largest most widely extended pre-European colonial related group of about 1,200 languages, 20% of the world’s total, spoken by 270 million to 300 million people mostly island based in a region that extends across the Pacific and Indian oceans (Wurm and Hattori 1981, 1983). Most of these languages are endanger of extinction.¹⁰

Today Austronesia is a sweeping generalization – mixed with origins, languages, societies, cultures, geographies, and

peoples. In Taiwan, fourteen Austronesian-speaking peoples are officially registered as Formosan language groups and Yami with the ROC Council of Indigenous Peoples. And as mentioned – they represent just one ethnic minority nationality for the PRC. Yet, many more groups are in Taiwan, counting historic societies – and revitalization of languages are currently taking place. The language groups represent just 2% of the Taiwan population and have long faced discrimination and marginalization. Yet, from their point of view, the ROC’s international isolation could be seen in a positive light as their cultures and communities benefit from heritage recognition and resource aid.

Politics of Asia-Pacific with Taiwan and China

As the PRC’s influence in global affairs has grown, the ROC’s support is now 23 governments of official recognition worldwide – six countries are in the Pacific. ROC Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou’s first Pacific visit was postponed from last October due to pressures of rescue and relief work after the southern Taiwan destruction of Typhoon Morakot, but the delay also resulted in a change in the program. The original plan drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had intended to convene the Third Taiwan-Pacific Allies Summit in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, following two similar summits initiated by former ROC Taiwan President Chen Shuibian in Palau, September 2006, and the Marshall Islands, September 2007. For President Ma – his office decided to replace the summit with traditional bilateral state visits to the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Solomon Islands, and Palau.

¹⁰ For definitions on language endangerment, see Wurm 1997.

Former President Chen initiated the Pacific summit approach to build a consolidated “democratic community” among the nations of the Pacific including – if not modeled on the democracy of Taiwan.

This multilateral strategy aimed to improve a regional image by promoting better governance and progress in a range of fields that complemented the “Pacific Plan” of the 15-nation Pacific Islands Forum. Australia and New Zealand welcomed the strategy as an innovative departure from the notorious past practice of “money diplomacy” fostered by the rivalry between the authoritarian People’s Republic of China and democratic Taiwan (see Engbarth 2010).¹¹ President Ma renounced the multilateral approach in the Pacific region, based on a “diplomatic truce” between the Kuomintang (KMT) government of Taiwan and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ruling from Beijing. The idea is based on the view that KMT Taiwan and CCP China are now in a stabilized relationship more sincerely than group cooperative ties with the six Pacific island countries.

Taiwan Austronesian Heritage

For any aspect of the past, there are many narratives, or none. Histories are always multiple and incomplete. Many factors influence what histories are, or can be written. Heritage is what we have now from the past: The goods that we inherit from our parents, the residues of toxic wastes, memories and artifacts that we cherish and retain, our genetic inheritance, and such culture as we have absorbed and made our own. Included in our cultural, intellectual, and professional heritage are the historical narratives we know and we accept, and which help shape our sense of identity – as opposed to those that we don’t know or don’t accept.

Michael Buckland (2002) draws these concepts stated above from Fentress and Wickham (1992) writing about the processes by which narratives come to (1) selected, (2) adopted, (3) rehearsed, and (4) adapted. The process that will become the accepted mythic account including our heritage of information systems is a legacy that we use, and influences what we do, are the consequences not only of past, but also of past decisions about adoption and implementation.¹² Our sense of history is doubly accidental, because it depends not only on what narratives happened to be.

¹¹ See, http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=1212335&lang=eng_news&cate_img=logo_taiwan&cate_rss=TAIWAN_eng ¹² Amis heritage of East Coast of Taiwan, see Li *et al.* 1992; Li 1998.

Composed, but also on which ones were accepted, “received,” and incorporated into our sense of the past. New ways of looking at connections are before us. “Being Austronesian” is beckoning as a source of heritage pride, becoming known across the Pacific (see Tsai 1999; Anderson 2009). How will the social sciences deal with the issues, and recent claims? ¹³

Taiwan has an obvious shared linkage with Austronesian speaking peoples of the Pacific. This was culturally acknowledged in establishing an Austronesian Cultural Forum in Palau in 2006. This initiative was to interact with Pacific peoples applying for United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage status for endangered Austronesian languages and their associated cultures. Politically to include Taiwan in UNESCO World Heritage programs is blocked by the PRC. ¹⁴ Yet, Taiwan with its impressive list of Formosan languages cannot be ignored (Li 2000, 2001 a, b).

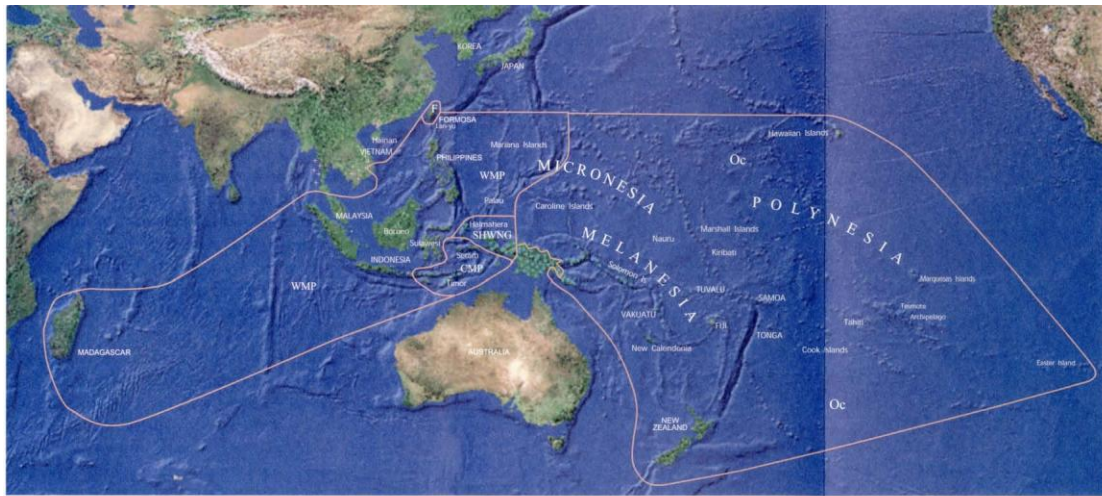
What is at issue here? As an anthropologist it’s about discerning value in languages and cultures (Li 1989). Scientifically Taiwan is source to the earliest developments of the Austronesian Language Family. About half the linguistic subgroups of the language family are found among the Formosan languages, about nine. The other Austronesian linguistic sub-groups are dispersed across the Pacific and Indian oceans – primarily island based with the furthest range of geographic dispersals of any language family. Utilization of sea craft to leave the Asian mainland and voyage outwards is the hallmark of this language family.

Taiwan is not only a language stepping-stone into the Pacific from the Asian continent; it served as the incubator for the language family to develop linguistically and culturally. What about the people in Taiwan, are they Austronesian? No – people cannot be a language family, anymore than I could be an Indo-European person. Here I am speaking English – I am an Indo-European speaker of a language family dispersing across Eurasia including Iceland and South Asia for thousands of years to the 16th century – and since then worldwide. Austronesian speakers in Taiwan are connected in a similar way to about 1,200 languages dispersed across numerous islands east and southwards. People in the Philippines or Micronesia to Hawai’i or New Zealand share common vocabulary, such as lima – “give me five” number five, ¹³ See, *The Past as a Scarce Resource*, Appaduri 1981. ¹⁴ I have mapped a dozen tangible World Heritage Sites in Taiwan – yet, China prohibits application to UNESCO in Paris (see Blundell 2003). Other potential intangible World Heritage includes the nominated eight harmonic music of Bunun (see Hsu 1987 a, b).

or fingers on the hand. Legends, such as the short-stature people who provided environmental and cultural knowledge to the Austronesian speakers upon their arrive to an island, even though the island was completely uninhabited prior to settlement. Cultural systems, beliefs, and art enjoy patterns of similarities across the great expanses of ocean – a conduit of linkages across a region known as Austronesia.

Asia-Pacific, Taiwan and Austronesia

Asia-Pacific studies geographically include the regions of the Asian mainland bordering on the Pacific, or related seas. Austronesia initiates from the Southern Western rim of the Pacific extending across to its eastern extent in Polynesia. Taiwan is in this starting realm. For archaeological sites of Austronesian speakers across the Pacific – early settlements



Key to the Austronesian Language Map
 F Formosan Languages
 CMP Central Malayo-Polynesian Languages
 SHWNG South Halmahera West New Guinea
 WMP Western Malayo-Polynesian Languages
 Oc Oceanic Languages
 Papuan Languages

Structure of the Austronesian Language Family
 AN Austronesian
 F Formosan Languages
 MP Malayo-Polynesian Languages
 CMP Central Malayo-Polynesian Languages
 EMP Eastern Malayo-Polynesian Languages
 SHWNG South Halmahera West New Guinea
 WMP Western Malayo-Polynesian Languages
 Oc Oceanic Languages

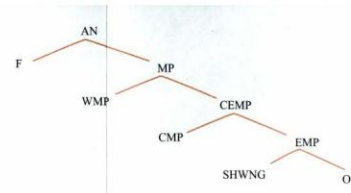


Figure 1
 Distribution of the Austronesian Language Family and Major Subgroupings. Adapted from the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, National Australian University. Structure of the Austronesian Language Family from Blust.

Bellwood 2009: 343-344.

that are younger and younger spread further out, with Taiwan having the earliest cultural sites sequentially. The earlier Taiwan Paleolithic (Late Old Stone Age) cultures of the region (described by archaeologist by Sung 1969) lasted until the arriving Neolithic peoples. At that time the region of Taiwan was the Asian East Coast. Paleolithic peoples moved across grassy plains of what is now the Taiwan Strait following large grazing mammals. Later when Taiwan became an island, Neolithic cultures were transported by sea craft probably originating from continental river estuaries to make it across of open seas. It is with the Neolithic cultures arriving in Taiwan from 6,500 years ago that originated pre-or early Austronesian languages. The languages codified and spread across the region probably acting as an early trade *lingua franca*.¹⁵

About 4,500 years ago, cultural evidence from Taiwan, such as Nephrite jade from Hualien, indicate from the archaeological record that artifacts moved southwards to the Philippines via the Batanes Islands. This is a key scientific indicator. The oldest sites of particular cultures point to sources of those cultures. Archaeological evidence from about 3,500 years ago shows the initial Austronesian speakers dispersal into the Pacific to Western Micronesia (the Marianas and Palau archipelagoes), and from the Bismarck Archipelago. Early sites exhibit red-slipped pottery, some of which is decorated impressed designs and radiocarbon-dated sediment cores of burnt materials of human presence. Later, people moved to more remote areas of Oceania: Vanuatu, Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa. In

the last 2,000 to 1,000 years, evidence is found to the extent of Hawai'i, Madagascar, and New Zealand completing modern Austronesia.

Robert Blust (1985, 1996 a, b) a linguist and Peter Bellwood (1997, 1999, 2009) an archaeologist have championed the "Out of Taiwan" theory based on Formosan language concentration and antiquity. Jared Diamond (2000) in his article "Taiwan's Gift to the World" illustrates how this happened. Stephen Oppenheimer and Martin Richards (2001) offer an alternative to the "Taiwan to Polynesia theory" by giving evidence that "genetic anomalies" that signify Polynesian populations, also known as the "Polynesia motif," are sourced from the Indonesian archipelago. It is certainly true that Oppenheimer and Richards have established that genetically, most likely the people of Polynesia probably had ancestors who had lived for a long period in current day eastern Indonesia, yet the Austronesian issue is about the dispersal of languages.

Of course people of Taiwan did not give rise to the population of Austronesia
– as mentioned, the Formosan languages gave impetus for communication, trade, and cultural development that extended in an arc through Island Southeast Asia. The earlier populations of the Sunda region of the South China Sea originated from migrations walking across a sub-continent of Southeast Asia during the last ices ages

¹⁵ For archaeology and ethnology vis-à-vis Austronesian speakers and Taiwan, see Blundell 1995, 1997, 2004, 2009; Chang 1989; Chen and Chang 1996; Kirch 2000; Li 1989; Lien 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2002; Tsang 2000 a, b, c.

– prior to Neolithic settlement in Taiwan. This belongs to the Holocene demographic prehistory of Southeast Asia.¹⁶ Richards (2008) states: "Our genetic evidence suggests that probably from about 12,000 years ago these people began to recover from ... [ice ages, climate/weather changes] ... and expanded greatly in numbers, spreading out in all directions, including north to Taiwan, west to the Southeast Asian mainland, and east towards New Guinea. These migrations have not previously been recognized archaeologically, but we have been able to show that there is supporting evidence in the archaeological record too." "I think the study results are going to be a big surprise for many archaeologists and linguists on whose studies conventional migration theories are based. These population expansions had nothing to do with agriculture, but were most likely to have been driven by climate change – in particular, global warming and the resulting sea-level rises at the end of the Ice Age between 15,000-7,000 years ago." As a result of the sea raising, Sundaland – Southeast Asian Subcontinent – became present-day Island Southeast Asia.

¹⁷ Austronesia is a term of modern history. Although the Austronesian Language Family traces its origins from prehistory, it was not cognized as to its spread and scope until 19th century linguistic research conducted primarily by Europeans – missionaries, colonial servants, and tradesmen doing language learning, recording, and comparison. The efforts of Jules D'Ormont in 1883 gave raise to the terms Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Ethnolinguistics in the early 20th century pursued the region to further define languages, such as pioneers Otto Dempwolff and Erwin Stresemann. Wilhelm Schmidt initiated *Anthropos* and facilitated the overarching term of Austronesian as a language family of the Formosan and Malayo-Polynesia (see Blundell 2009: 402-403).

¹⁶ Professor of Archaeogenetics, Martin Richards, at University of Leeds, has given evidence that a substantial fraction of Southeast Asian people's mitochondrial DNA lineages (inherited by matrilineal descent), have developed within Island Southeast Asia. Genetic evidence offers new theories about human migration into Island Southeast Asia (covering the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysian Borneo) – taking the timeline back by thousands of years. This is about peoples of Sunda Continental Shelf before submerged after the last Ice Age. Clearly stated not about language, it's about migrating people dating back 50,000-7,000 years ago. The argument counters Neolithic expansion from Taiwan driven by rice agriculture about 4,500 years ago known as the "Out of Taiwan" model, or does it?¹⁷ I define history as written record of events, reflects, thoughts, religions, lineage, etc. Prehistories are primary oral traditions.

The present state of the term is based on linguistics and archaeology supporting the origins and existence of the Austronesian Language Family covering – modern Taiwan, Orchid Island, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Madagascar, Micronesia, Polynesia, the non-Papuan languages of Melanesia, Cham areas of Vietnam, Cambodia, Hainan Island, and Myanmar islands. Defining the breadth and scope of Austronesia from mid-20th century linguistic and archaeological research will provide a basis for the term as a language family, the

region and its inhabitants.

Modern Inspiration – Calling from Formosa

In the 1970s a Sámi (Laplander) from Norway visited to commune with the Paiwan people of southern Taiwan. He initiated the concept of “pan-indigenous” citing Native Americans, First Nations of Canada, Peoples of Amazonia, Maori of New Zealand, and Australian Aborigines. By the 1980s indigenous people in Taiwan were attending the United Nations forums in Geneva for indigenous rights. By the early 1990s after the lifting of Taiwan martial law, representatives of indigenous peoples have reached out to other Austronesian peoples of the Pacific for people-to-people diplomatic exchange. Taitung County has officially ushered in a cross-cultural exchange hosting an annual Austronesian festival inviting peoples of the Pacific to share commonality of heritage (see Blundell 2009:422-424).

Formosan Children’s Websites

Over the last several years in Taiwan, school children of Formosan language speaking villages have set up multilingual websites to express their culture. Websites created by children of indigenous communities are linked to the Internet showing the capabilities of community involvement with simplified digitization tools that allow community input of language resources from specific locations (see the 2005 Taiwan school children’s websites: at Fu-Shan Elementary School, Wu-Lai Township, Taipei County, Taiwan (<http://gsh.taiwanschoolnet.org/gsh2005/3895/index.htm>); at Jing-Yue Elementary School, Jing-Yue Community, Nan-Ao Village, Yi-Lan County, Taiwan (<http://gsh.taiwanschoolnet.org/gsh2005/3749/index.htm>).

Taiwan Sense of Place

For years, people in Taiwan have been advocating a sense of place in *being* uniquely Taiwanese.¹⁸ But, until recently the sense of Taiwan as indigenous received few listeners since the buzz of the world trend was greater in favor of the China mainland perspective. The indigenous perspective, with its own definition of “being” is gaining acceptance as a sense of quality. Its a developing sense of living aesthetics vis-à-vis our local ethos (see Blundell 2009; Hsieh 1994). The trend is displaying a regional theme throughout Oceania in the social sciences of politics, economics, and tourism (Adams 1984; Crocombe 1999 a, b).

People are expecting a social and aesthetic understanding in their own environment in the context of the greater region – Asia-Pacific more sensitive and aware of indigenous cultures. This Asia-Pacific cross-cultural aesthetic is gaining acceptance in the general public. It is experiencing *a way of doing things* in other cultures and finding that other worldviews offer completeness that people would traditionally expect from their own culture (Arnheim 1974; Maquet 1986; Blundell 1996). The awareness in the past years has created an ethos from planning to cultural facilities and activities, the layout of public spaces, and museums (Woods 2009) that has brought out awareness through conservation and presentation.

The Taiwan region is conceptualizing its island-ness.¹⁹ A path is being determined with a myriad of factors placed before it.

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