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Thesis

In-depth Analysis of the Presence of Aborigines in National Politics

Political Predicament of Taiwanese Indigenous People



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Abstract

Inspired by the barriers to social integration between aboriginals and non-indigenous people in Taiwan, as well as the limitations of representation and participation in national politics, and extending to turn deeply to aboriginal identity recognition and related movements, this dissertation adopts liberalism as grand background and takes scholarly scientific theory constructivism to illustrate the meanings and applicability of discourse analysis method in order to investigate textual materials notably official documents including the Constitution and Acts, press releases as well as academic articles about how those materials describe indigenous peoples. Additionally, through the deployment of practical theories such as (post) colonialism, multiculturalism, representative democracy and deliberative democracy to interpret social and political facts in Taiwan. The author has found that the description of indigenous people in Taiwanese statute through the change from inequitable titles to relatively respectful takes into account the acceptability of aboriginals. The integration of indigenous Taiwanese in society is still persisting and causes troubles for the routine life of aboriginals. Furthermore, it has been observed that the recognition of aboriginal identity hinders the willingness and possibility of indigenous peoples to participate in national politics. Meanwhile, the national global status impact on indigenous peoples has been evident.

Key words

Indigenous people, Taiwanese, Aboriginals, Aboriginal identity, Recognition, Multiculturalism, (Post)colonialism, Representative democracy, Deliberative democracy

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1 Introduction

Although indigenous people do not occupy too many proportions of the global population around 6%, they account for approximately one-fifth of awfully poor populations in the world according to the latest data (*Indigenous Peoples, 2022*). The commonly struggling situation faced by aboriginals is around the maintenance of their particular culture, languages, and the original territories they lived in as well as recognition of their identity. Aboriginals are relatively rarely seen in the political decision-making processes of the countries in which they live ('Consent, Participation of Indigenous Peoples in Decisions Affecting Them Vital to Advancing Their Rights, Special Rapporteur Tells Third Committee', 2017; *Minorities and indigenous peoples*, n.d.). At the same time, the entitlements to their homeland and way of life have kept eroding from the colonial period until the modern era. The movements for defending their due rights have been constant in recent history. It is only certain special groups of these aboriginal populations, perhaps relatively large ones or ones that have suffered more heinous crimes such as massacres ordered by the colonial regimes, that will be seen and heard on the world stage (*australian aborigine*, 2010). On the contrary, they should be the owner of their ancestral land, but they are barely visible neither to authorities nor to the public. Even in a pluralistic society, indigenous people have been marginalised more or less.

Compared with realism theory focuses on the states as the subjects of the world structure and pays significant attention to, when liberalism interprets how the world works, it proclaims that the world is proceeding under a global order oriented by democracy, liberality, and freedom of individuals, the rights and interests of everyone thusly should be concerned and valued which put individuals as the subjects of forming the world (Doyle, 2016, P.55). Broadening sight to the global scale, indigenous minorities are usually invisible due to various reasons such as unknown, unrecognisable existence, exclusion from the majority, being seen as an ethnic group before the enlightenment of civilisation, not being valued by society and government etc., and these are significant issues that are prevalent throughout the world as well (SDG Knowledge Hub of International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), 2019). Even though a few indigenous nations have a relatively strong sense of presence at the national level and have achieved remarkable results



in autonomy, they are still fighting for ratifying conventions on consolidating indigenous positions and being more valued, like the Sami people (Beckman, Gover and Mörkenstam, 2021). Everywhere the indigenous people lived, the degree of societal tolerance towards them symbolises the acceptance of the indigenous people by the majority population as well as to some extent shows the inclusion by politics. But tolerance to minorities all over the world is less. In many instances, the basic human rights of indigenous minorities even cannot be guaranteed although the rights of minorities are clearly defined in United Nations indelibly ('International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights', 1966), not to speak of the presence of aboriginals in national politics.

The development of this paper will centre on the presence of indigenous Taiwanese in national politics and aim to make it empirically and theoretically alongside in nature. The initial motive of this thesis due to the particular political characteristics of Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China) that the vast majority of its citizens believe the Republic of China is a different country from the People's Republic of China (PRC) which the latter globally claims Taiwan belongs to the PRC and the official recognition has been sidestepped by the most countries of the international community as well. How the aboriginals living in such a land participate in their own national politics when their own national political stance is so uncertain, is the mighty motivation for proceeding with this paper. The author is expected to fulfil a gap in the academic field regarding the presence of Taiwanese aboriginals in national politics as a whole. There is some research on the recognition of indigenous Taiwanese and on their autonomy as well. However, making aboriginals' participation and representation in state politics an entire subject is rare. In addition to including the aforementioned specific issues, the consideration of the political status of the country in the international arena and how this presence is exploited by the disputes among various parties are going to carry into this thesis as well.

1.1 Aim

This thesis is going to revolve around the aboriginal political presence, explicitly referring to Taiwanese indigenous people in national politics. To look through what probable reasons for the status quo that lacking the indigenous people's participation in national politics, the author will apply the discourse analysis method



to examine the influence of discourse in various materials on the identity recognition and political participation of indigenous people to dig further into whether the ethnic identification of aboriginals makes them reluctant to participate in state politics or state policies impede aboriginal political participation possibilities as well as how long-standing colonisation by several invaders among others the Japanese and then followed by Han-Chinese influenced aboriginal self-recognition. One possibility of self-identity recognition that will be looked into is whether the aboriginals prefer to admit the identity of their own ethnicity and do not have much sense of belonging to the country. Another possibility is that some aboriginal descendants have been undergoing several generations of Taiwanisation and lost their mindset as an aboriginal. Both possibilities shall be discussed later. It is expected that the contemporary situation will be handled by political theories such as whether the representative democracy and deliberative democracy model in Taiwan make a difference in the existence of aboriginals in national politics and furthermore, that a more academic, comprehensive and rational explanation will be reached. Textual materials for instance academic articles associated with political science especially related to this topic, official documents including but not limited to policies, and relatively neutral media coverage about aboriginal political movements are anticipated to use.

The research questions in this dissertation are:

- a) How are aboriginal identities described in the law and how have these descriptions changed over time?
- b) How is the relationship between aboriginal identity and society through various textual materials outlined?
- c) How are indigenous identities associated with politics?
- d) How can the constructions and descriptions of the Taiwanese aboriginals interpret in theoretical terms?

1.2 Background

1.2.1 In General

Indigenous people have a strong bond with the land they resided which has cultivated their culture and way of life. Meanwhile, indigenous people have reciprocity with the ecosystem of their ground concurrently. Indigenous knowledge



and wisdom make the eco-environment sustainable and have high ecological resilience and likewise, the natural living context reciprocates rich native resources to aboriginals (The World Bank, 2022; Cajete, 2020). Their lifestyle has been formed by the living environment and has shaped the effective and self-improved social system within the clan they belonged to. Indigenous knowledge and practices are the ability of aboriginals to govern themselves orderly and ordinarily, ethnic politics within their tribes are autonomous (United Nations, 2018; Cajete, 2020). Apart from being ethically considered, it is unenforceable to put external people into the procedure of governing indigenous tribes. Objectively look at it, due to the diversity of indigenous people and their cultures, it is also impracticable, self-determination is furthermore explicitly defined in several international covenants in tandem. Thus, self-governing is one of the rational options when the state considers how to preserve the culture of aboriginals and respectfully maintain their original life mode ('United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', 2007). However, the ratification of getting autonomy back to indigenous people is a lengthy and complicated way as it requires compliance with the regulations of the country in which they reside and on some occasions states have to consider the possible instability of relationships between multiple parties caused by conflicting with interests of the private sector (Higgins, 2009; International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2018). Furthermore, when this situation happened on a global level, to say, take the global context into account, indigenous people as the less existence are barely unable to be seen or heard when the country struggles with its own international political status.

1.2.2 In Taiwan

Taiwanese indigenous people have been living on Taiwan land for over 5000 years as the 'First Nations' (Munsterhjelm, 2010; Yeh, 2006). The aboriginals in Taiwan can be traced back to their origins as Austronesian-speaking peoples (Blust, 1995). Those indigenous people first time had taken to the world stage in the form of colonisation since the 17th century subjugated chronologically by the Dutch, the Spanish (the colonial period of the two alike overlap), invaders represented the empire of the mainland across the strait, Japanese and so forth (Munsterhjelm, 2010). From then on, the cloud of colonisation has never lifted. With the surrender of Japan in World War II and the subsequent withdrawal from Taiwan, the Kuomintang (KMT, also refers as the Chinese Nationalist Party and Guomindang



(GMD) in certain contexts), which was the official ruling party in China at that moment as well as the first ruling party at the Republic of China and also one of the active parties in the contemporary society of this country, has taken over Taiwan (*HISTORY*, n.d.; Friedman, 2018). In the early years of the Kuomintang's rule, for consolidating the legitimacy of their authority, the colonial ferocity had even escalated until martial law, which is an extremist ruling method as a strategy for strengthening power and caused many tragedies in that period, gradually eradicated in 1987 onwards (Munsterhjelm, 2010; *Martial Law*, n.d.). During this time, there was no freedom of thought and expression and thousands of people, including many aboriginals, were brutally killed (Smith, 2012).

1.2.3 The Status Quo of Participation and Representation of Aboriginals on Legislation

Article 10 of *Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China* completed the amendment in 1999 clearly states that the state guarantees the political participation of aboriginals. Meanwhile, it includes proactive assistance for the preservation of aboriginal culture and language which is in line with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China, 1999; 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', 2007)*. Nonetheless, there are only 6 seats for aboriginals in the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China which holds the same function as the parliament, which represents approximately 5% of the total number of legislators (*Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China, 1999*). If only from the perspective of proportion, it is reasonable in the light of the percentage of aboriginal population only accounts for 2.5% of the total population of the Republic of China. However, one necessary consideration of it is that there are 16 recognised aboriginal ethnic groups which are far from enough to be completely represented in 6 seats in the Legislative Yuan (Executive Yuan of Republic of China, 2023). Furthermore, I will explain in follow-up sections that some aboriginal tribes are unsatisfied to be classified as the current ethnicity and some even cannot be recognised as aboriginals at this moment in time.

2 Previous Research

Ku (2005) looked at the changing status of the indigenous people in the country caused by the reconstructively national political system through the political



perspective of identity recognition to bring it into contemporary Taiwan where nationalism is considered to be prevalent, in order to examine if the switch of indigenous status reinforces the new national identity and the relation between two concepts which are aboriginal identity and national identity in practice. Ku paid the foremost attention to the concept of identity due to identity was not only associated with aboriginal self-identity recognition, social recognition, and national recognition but respecting their culture and dignity as human beings, and furthermore, a prerequisite for being able to live liberally once again in the land where their ancestors have lived for generations. Through the investigation and research on the social background of the establishment of several organisations concerned with the rights of indigenous people in Taiwan, it expounded the numerous impacts of the national political system on the identity of aboriginals (Ku, 2005).

Like Ku, Friedman (2018) also focused on the relationship between indigenous identity and rising nationalism in the country. Friedman believed that nationalism was a concept propagated by the political party Kuomintang to legitimise its status when it took over Taiwan from imperial Japan after World War II and it was still one of the soft political tools of its party today by using the idea of diversity to make alliance in case of strengthening this new broad national concept, which could be called local hegemony. It was worth noting that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Kuomintang suspected that its rival parties were the ones using nationalist rhetoric. Moreover, Friedman went through deeper to research the discourse were using to describe indigenous people and the changing of these descriptions during the time as well. He also mentioned the relationship between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China as well as the impact of the international status of the Republic of China on indigenous people. Taiwanese aboriginals always disappeared when people focus on this relationship due to the indigenous identity is easily overlooked in society. But in recent years, indigenous people had participated in national politics on this global-relevant topic and even publicly condemn the hegemonic behaviours on the other side of the Taiwan Strait such as opposing the participation of the Taiwanese indigenous peoples in relevant United Nations conferences and the constant and fierce assertion of the non-sovereign status of the Republic of China (Friedman, 2018; Aspinwall, 2019). This is a rejection of the sovereignty of the place where their ancestors have lived. Another previous research on indigenous identity which was also vital for basic knowledge of this dissertation



was a study in that scholars Hsieh and Lakaw (2019), through their aboriginal identities, provided a brief account of indigenous identity from an inside and historical perspective. Aboriginal culture has been eroded by extrinsic cultures from the colonial period, resulting in some irreversible situations today, such as the verge of extinction of some aboriginal cultures (Hsieh and Lakaw, 2019).

The research looking at the participation of voters expressed that the degree of the proportion to which citizens participate in voting is critical to the governing legitimacy and the quality of democracy. Researchers contended the relevance of aboriginal political participation, specifically referred to the voting process, resulted in if it was the legitimacy of the Han Chinese-dominated rule. The more aboriginals who vote means the more they recognise the legitimacy of the party in power. Moreover, researchers also pointed out that the personal characteristics and psychological attitudes of indigenous voters including the sense of civic responsibility was partial obstacles to voting. How much indigenous peoples are concerned with the state and society will affect their willingness to vote. Identification with political parties also influenced the willingness of voting. The voting participation of aboriginals is an important segment of the political participation of indigenous people, to get certain knowledge of the status quo of the aboriginal political predicament (Pao and Chou, 2015).

When considering the societal condition that affected the difficulty of aboriginal participation and representation in politics, the study of multiculturalism is pivotal. Like the aforementioned scholar Friedman, when he studied indigenous identity, he made the connection between indigenous identity and the multicultural society and dug into the impact of multicultural relevant policies such as multicultural education on indigenous identity, the self-interest purpose of the advocacy of multiculturalism from different aspects in nation and society, especially multiculturalism as a means of ruling for a certain political party. In light of the current pluralistic society in Taiwan, multiculturalism is fundamental to the essential condition for research (Friedman, 2018).

Smith (2012) investigated the presence of aboriginals in public narratives and through the fact that the multicultural initial concept which was the society included many ethnicities was brought into the common expression in the late 1980s to review how societal and national narratives illustrated the image of indigenous



people and their unbearable history as well as how the demands of autonomy by indigenous people associated with historical narratives (Smith, 2012).

3 Method

Following the characteristics of this thesis as part of studying political science, starting from this empirical case of Taiwanese aboriginals to verify the impact of aboriginal identity and other possibilities on their participation and representation in national politics, broadening the view to macro-analysis in the national political system afterwards with other political concepts such as representative democracy, etc., the qualitative approaches will be processed on this thesis (Flick, 2018, p.4). As the universal and fundamental way to express reality, texts are premier to know phenomenon and follow up to analyse as well as more reliable than some other methods such as observation in principle (Flick, 2018, p.p.68-69; Silverman, 2020, p.92). Therefore, it is anticipated that through the discourse analysis method to examine various textual materials, as an approach to communication to reality, to look for the network between individuals, individuals and society, individuals and groups, the interactions between each other units in reality, as well as how this network is structured by languages and how discourse explicitly and implicitly shapes the status quo (Flick, 2018, p.68 & p.378). Unambiguously, the analysis will concentrate on how indigenous identity has been constructed in diverse formats of texts and how those texts mutually react to indigenous groups in parallel. Meanwhile, how the relations between indigenous peoples and society as well as the state will be described. Further followed by inferring how the self-identity of aboriginals formed and how ethnic minorities handle their own political system as well as the interpretation of relevant written records on the participation and representation of the indigenous people in the state's politics. Before starting to talk about the aboriginal political presence, one must be clarified is how can people view this point. Apart from being one of the aboriginals or by their side perceiving or seeing their actions in society or the nation, the prevalent way to know it is through media coverage, articles, policies and so forth. That is the point of applying the approach of discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis as a theoretical approach appears in this place due to the author aims to analyse how the identity of aboriginals is described by the discourse, and the impacts of words towards social facts through the different use and forms of



languages in textual materials (Flick, 2018, p.501). When examining how Taiwanisation has affected indigenous self-identity, for instance, it exemplifies an investigation through the description by texts about the connection between indigenous groups and society. Taiwanisation is a process reinforced by the prevailing policies and it made the Taiwanese society at that time have a unique way of presentation and discourse analysis methods can examine the language used in policies and reactions from indigenous people (Jacobs, 2005, p.p.17-54). The subjects of analysing discourse also include the use of words and languages in the aboriginal society for example some indigenous clans have their own languages together with some have even more, as well as the words people say and the texts people write to express their thoughts are constructing the society and worth to examine for contributing this thesis (*國情簡介-語言文字 (Country Profile – Languages)*, 2023).

Keep following the keywords, namely aboriginals, aboriginal identity, indigenous peoples, society, state, to categorise those materials and mark them down. The upcoming items are about what detailed subjects can be looked into during the process of research (Flick, 2018, p.503).

- How indigenous people are described in various contexts, such as in academia, official documents, and media press? In other words, how the feature of aboriginals is given from those materials?
- How is aboriginal identity described by aboriginals themselves?
- How is aboriginal identity described by the state?
- How do different political parties have different descriptions of aboriginals?
- How is aboriginal identity described by the public/ the society, especially referring to those non-aboriginal citizens?
- How is aboriginal identity related to the (post) colonial era in history and the contemporary context?
- How primary self-recognition of aboriginal identity themselves is for analysing the willingness to participate in the national political process?
- How do the national policy, Acts, the Constitution describe the permission for aboriginals to participate and represent in the national political process?
- How the national political model has an impact on the participation and representation of indigenous peoples in national politics?



4 Materials

The primary materials building up this thesis will be sources of, among others, previous papers as empirical literature, and official documents of institutions/organisations (Flick, 2018, p.151). Some relevant media coverage is expected to be used if they do not obviously lean towards any political stance. When using documents like the aforementioned, the writing purpose and target readers of the product of those documents need to be clarified as well. In this section, the author will introduce the timeframe of each sort of materials and where they have been found as well as the target readers. Those sources not only intend to be anticipated to convey the meaning of the content, which is how discourse analysis is going to be conducted but also some writing works are going to be as independent subjects to examine the impact of them on forming the current situation, such as whether certain launches of policies change the view of participating in national politics of aboriginals (Silverman, 2020, p.291). For determining a certain number of relevant articles, textbooks such as theoretical and methodological literature, documents, etc. from numerous potential materials, searching by keywords is at the outset.

4.1 Official Documents

In this dissertation, some relevant national documents of the Republic of China (ROC) will be used to illustrate the situation of the status of indigenous peoples as officially recognised at national and societal levels, namely the Constitution, press releases from the government, policies, as well as Acts. Simultaneously, some information about the basic facts will be provided by the website of the government portals. The ROC's advocacy and attitudes towards aboriginal existence are planned to be unpacked from the aforementioned sources. Official documents are the most accurate indication of how much a country values the status and political rights of indigenous people. Most government documents derive from the Executive Yuan and the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China which are the executive power and legislature of Taiwan as well as the main body of government (*Structure and Functions*, n.d.; *Legislative Yuan*, n.d.), along with the Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China (Taiwan). The time spectrum of those documents from the time of the ROC Constitution enacted in 1946 until today (*Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan)*, 1946). The purpose of those



documents includes interpreting the claims and policies of the state to the public and the target group for reading and looking at these official documents is also the public and public servants who are using those documents as guidelines for their actions and works.

4.2 Media Releases

Media releases can be separated into two types: media releases from non-governmental organisations such as various foundations and media coverage. It is worth emphasising when getting information from the media, confirming the reliability of the sources and ensuring the objectivity of these media reports is a key ethic in media materials selection.

4.2.1 Media Releases from Non-Governmental Organisations

Some websites of organisations that are unrelated to any political party, at least claimed by themselves so, will be used as one sort of media material. The feature of those releases is that they make their comments on specific social topics merged with relatively professional knowledge as well. They are taking a social perspective which represents one of the social voices. 7 samples of releases from non-governmental organisations will be investigated on the presence of indigenous Taiwanese under some subjects of Taiwanese democratisation, deliberative democracy, and the like.

4.2.2 Media Coverage

Some media coverage shows the social life of aboriginals affected by their national political status which with less aboriginal attendance, and indigenous political movements. Reports will also be used to corroborate how Taiwanese indigenous people express their political views and how the media perceive the political plight of indigenous peoples and how this issue is presented to the public. Media as the only informal way of the aboriginal voices can be heard, has a significant position in materials for studying this topic. There are 5 samples of coverage from the media concerning aboriginal social movements and the voice of aboriginals that will be analysed.

The timeframe of this sort of coverage covers from 2009 to 2023. The purpose of those media coverage apart from documenting facts, is interpreting the convention of the society, as well as expressing opinions of individuals. The target reader is the



general public and sometimes for showing the opinions of the press to the state and society as well since the media is a crucial part to shape and influence society (Ihlebak *et al.*, 2022).

4.3 Academic Articles

The handling of previous academic papers is mainly to view the scholarly existent standpoints on the topic of this dissertation. To what extent and what aspects previous research was looked into about Taiwanese indigenous people and how those articles have connected with theories of political science. The timeframe of these academic articles has no specific limits since some research is still inspiring on aboriginal issues and making reasonable explanations. The outcomes of these pieces of research have attempted to offer scientific explanation of the societal or political facts. The target group for reading those articles comprises scholars and students in relevant fields. In the process of collecting data, the author is using archival research and secondary data to complete this step since both types of documents are easily accessible to researchers and furthermore they are relatively reliable and representative following the criteria about how to select research materials (Flick, 2018, P.378).

5 Theory

When the topic was determined, the theoretical context was confirmed correlatively that liberalism would be the grand theory in this thesis, in the light of the study of the political rights of aboriginals which are in line with the core assertion of liberalists that the subject of examining focuses on individuals instead of states. Meanwhile, constructivism is going to be used as a main tool for analysing in most circumstances. In some cases, scholars view constructionism and constructivism as different theories in scientific study, however, Flick (2018) defined these two theories as one. Henceforward both of them will be considered as constructivism in this thesis to facilitate (Flick, 2018, p.36). In addition, substantive theories notably (post)colonialism, representative democracy, deliberative democracy, and multiculturalism, are going to be used to expand the analysis (Flick, 2018, p.152).



5.1 Theoretical Framework

Political participation as one of three ground rights of liberalism serves as a necessary condition for the other two rights which are broadly defined freedom and socioeconomic freedom to be ensured (Doyle, 2016, P.55). As an opposing claim towards authoritarian regimes, liberalism politically preserves the freedom of belief (Carlisle, 2007, p.279). It is this proposition that forms the main theoretical background for this dissertation. Following the proposition of classic liberalism that human beings can make correct decisions for themselves, and for so, liberality should belong to every individual even though the consequence of whether people would use rationality properly and appropriately caused various opinions among classic liberalists. The liberal idea that the government should let the economy achieve its own balance can also be applied to the political sphere, as can be seen from the self-governing societal pattern of the aboriginals since ancient times.

For the foremost practical theory in this paper which is constructivism, even though some view it as a method rather than a theory, the author would like to take it as a theory in this paper since it can help to understand several social forms such as how the societal running system of indigenous tribes builds up with the condition of indigenous society can be seen as an anarchic community without explicit organisation and how contemporary integrated society including indigenous peoples constructs in Taiwan. These formations are unable to be interpreted by any grand theories except constructivism. Moreover, it is anticipated that the societal network between individuals and the community in any indigenous tribe can also be interpreted clearly by constructivism (Flockhart, 2016, P.P.81-82). As one of the main theories in qualitative research, constructivism stresses the significance of knowledge. It is constructed through human cognition of the world as well as social conventions, consequently, reality will be interpreted through knowledge. The knowledge came from the routine life of human beings which is called first-degree constructions and these constructions are the premise of conceiving the knowledge for science which is titled second-degree constructions (Flick, 2018, p.p.70-71). The process of using theoretical concepts to analyse the subject matter of this essay is the best interpretation of constructivism. Whether it is the examination of aboriginal identity, the evaluation of post-colonialism, the direction of policy and the impact of the national political system on the participation and representation of aboriginals in



politics, all reality alike might be linked and reviewed by the aforementioned context theory (Flick, 2018, p.37; p.153).

5.2 Constructivism

Constructivism is not a theory applying to political science only, but also to several academic fields (Newman and Robbins, 2011, p.90). However, the inclusivity of the concept of constructivism allows it to work well in the context of the topics of interest in this dissertation. Even if constructivism is a newborn relative to realism and liberalism, the waves made by it in political science cannot be trifled with. Constructivists believe that the world order is not given as natural which is the former theories claimed but is contingent upon human minds. All of the aspects examined in this thesis namely identity, policy, social convention or political forms, alike be interpreted by constructivism as ideational structures (Omelicheva, 2010, p.470; Flockhart, 2016, p.p.84-85). The consensus of constructivism which is emphasising the interaction between social environment and individual behaviours and thoughts sheds light on the consistently mutual influence between the self-recognition of the aboriginal identity and policy regardless of colonial era or contemporary circumstances (Omelicheva, 2010, p.471). The focus of this paper is the political rights of aboriginals which is a concept imbued with human thought. Thus, even though the use of concepts of constructivism is a bit abstract, it can rationalise properly the empirical theme of this essay at the theoretical level.

Following the basic proposition of constructivism, the world is constructed by knowledge which is interpreted by beings as well as the changes within society due to people who keep getting or not getting more knowledge (Flick, 2018, p.p.37-38). Highlighting the political motivation of indigenous people or the lack of willingness of political participation requires analysis go through various aforementioned textual materials which can illustrate aboriginal reaction to national politics and interaction under politics between indigenous people and others. Those interactions and reactions that existed in the society plus the national actions precisely construct the aboriginal political status quo. Furthermore, the changes in the relationship between aboriginals and the society are taken place under those interactions and reactions. On the basis of constructivism, knowledge can interpret indigenous behaviours and thoughts as a whole, notably interpreting the indigenous communities, and can investigate how the cognition of self-identity forms and has



caused the process of the transfer from ancient autonomic governing to being colonised, until back again to self-governing or decolonising (Flick, 2018, p.37).

5.3 Academic Concepts

Globalisation as an inevitable background today to discuss any international or domestic issues, is consistently necessary to introduce first. Globalisation first gained attention in the early 1990s and has since brought about unprecedented changes in the environmental sphere, political cooperation, economic sphere, and people's daily lives ('Globalization, Anthropological Aspects Of', n.d.). In political science, globalisation means the integration of many aspects in the world (*Globalization and Politics*, n.d.). Globalisation has brought with it a convenient exchange of information in which indigenous people can reach out to other indigenous groups who are struggling or has struggled with political participation for similar or different reasons. Aboriginals from all over the world share their plights and action methods in order to obtain a more effective way of political participation and representing themselves in national politics as well as holding their due rights ('Globalization, Anthropological Aspects Of', n.d.).

Colonialism and post-colonialism are historical factors that have had a huge impact on the political predicament of indigenous peoples. Colonialism has a common definition in the dictionary as settlers go to another land to control the native resources and develop them. But it manifestly is a winner's perspective to define this term instead of a comprehensive view because the voice of natives has been overlooked (Loomba, 2015, p.p.19-20). The existence of this definition is just like the predicament faced by aboriginals who have frequently been undervalued in certain societies worldwide. This definition ignores the native inhabitants of the area before the arrival of the settlers, and the neglect of the aboriginals has been a long-standing and intractable issue in Taiwanese society as well (Zhu, 2019). Post-colonialism refers to the colonial area that has passed the colonial era/ status. However, it is still ambitious to determine if a place/ country surely transformed into a new societal form which means it is difficult to define if the place/ country can be treated as post-colonialism due to the core feature of colonialism -inequality – is hard to judge being eradicated (Loomba, 2015, p.p.28-29).



Multiculturalism can be viewed as an ideal ideology to create a more harmonious society. This concept was officially adopted around the second half of the twentieth century and refers to an inclusive society without ghettoising any minorities including indigenous groups and immigrants (Southerton, 2011, p.1006; Kymlicka, 1995, p.p.10-11). Nonetheless, the diverse cultures in a society or country not only consist of indigenous peoples and immigrants but some countries were originally formed by many nations historically which made those in a multicultural way for a long history (Kymlicka, 1995, p.13). Seemingly a rational outgrowth and sustaining form of liberalism, multiculturalism gets not few critiques. Critics think it destroys the purity of national identity and the terrorist attacks that occurred around the 2000s were also blamed by some on multiculturalism (Southerton, 2011, p.1008; Crepaz, 2006, p.93).

Taiwanisation is a process of assimilation by the agreement with most scholars after many debates in academic circles that the way of expressing culture, people, conventions, and so forth is acceptable to the majority of the people in the land of Taiwan (Jacobs, 2005, p.p.17-19). Undoubtedly, it is inevitable that the government can achieve its desired goals in some ways and form the society in its favour in the procedure of Taiwanisation (Jacobs, 2005, p.p.19-22). In the 1980s, some people even put forward the rhetoric that democratisation is Taiwanisation, linking Taiwanisation firmly with the pursuit of democracy (Jacobs, 2005, p.23). In the early years of the KMT's rule over Taiwan, forced sinicisation (Some used as sinification too) was one of its authoritarian means. The coercion of learning, following and supporting the Chinese culture they brought from mainland of China made the time when many local cultures, including aboriginal cultures, were broken down in an extremely tense social atmosphere (Chang, 2004).

Representative democracy as the mainstream political form of most modern democracies, stresses that sovereignty belongs to people who live on the land and representatives should be elected by people and speak for the people (Urbinati, 2011, p.p.23-24). And for another relevant practically political theory, namely deliberative democracy, it emphasises the significance of logically public discussion in policymaking procedure ('Deliberative democracy', 2023). Both political forms have played a foremost role in the construction of the current political model in Taiwan. The legislative Yuan that implements the representative democracy system



comprises legislators who are elected by the people and exercise legislative power. In tandem, legislators through the deliberative procedure reach an agreement for the next step of policymaking (*Legislative Yuan*, n.d.). The status quo of participation of Taiwanese aboriginals in these two political systems as mentioned in section 1.2.3 is that only six legislative seats are available for aboriginals to represent the 16 officially recognised aboriginal ethnicities and those who are not yet formally recognised as an indigenous identity. The deliberative mechanism is a bit more amicable than the representative mechanism for indigenous peoples in that they can express their views by participating in many forms of deliberative processes in society and the achievements have the possibility to be delivered to the policymaking procedure later regardless of their status.

6 Analysis

6.1 Aboriginal Identity

In this section, the author is going to analyse how indigenous identity is outlined in statute, what has undergone various kinds of changes and how those official appellations exhibit the government's stance on indigenous peoples—followed by how the society characterises indigenous people and how non-indigenous people, indigenous people and society mutually influence. When investigating the relationship between indigenous identity and national politics, the author will focus narrowly on the implementation of transitional justice in Taiwan.

6.1.1 Indigenous Identity in Statute

Advancing less offensive of the term 'indigenous peoples' in the Chinese language context has a lengthy history regardless of social or national level just like the term 'aborigines' has evolved into 'aboriginals' in the English language context. Since the Japanese occupation era, the use of 蕃 (*Fān*, an offensively old-use title and degrading term for indigenous peoples) had lasted for a long period until Kuomintang commenced ruling this land. After that, 山胞 (*Shān Bāo*, mountain people) had adapted to describe indigenous people. 'Mountain people' as a highly discriminated term in the Chinese language context with an implication that those people are barbaric, uncivilised, and ignorant, is not only an offensive appellation but leads to severe and unethical discrimination on aboriginal basic human rights, which constantly being used in the statute until the third revision of the Constitution



in 1994. This amendment was viewed by the general people as conveying a transformation of the stance of the government for indigenous peoples who are the original residents of this land (Yan and Zhang, 2022). Currently, three mainly approved classifications of indigenous people in Taiwan namely 山地原住民 (*Shāndì yuán zhùmín*, mountain indigenous peoples), 平地原住民 (*Píngdì yuán zhùmín*, Plain-land indigenous peoples) and 平埔族群 (*Píng pǔ zúqún*, Plains indigenous groups). The former two are classified by the highland and lowland constituencies with 3 seats which each has indicated in the aforementioned section 1.2.3 is 6 seats in total. When revising the Constitution, due to the highly assimilated way of life with Han Chinese of the plains indigenous groups, they are not sorted as either highland or lowland. Put simply, the plains indigenous groups are not formally treated as indigenous people in statute yet (《原住民身分法》修正—平埔原住民獲正名 (*Amendments to Status Act For Indigenous Peoples - the Plains Indigenous Peoples Are Named*), 2017). This gets confusing easily for some because even though the two concepts seem like having similar meanings of the plain-land and plains indigenous peoples, are defined basically according to which period of colonisation they were greatly affected. The plains indigenous groups refer to the aboriginals who lived in the plains and were ruled by the Dutch, Zheng family and Qing dynasties, while the officially recognised indigenous peoples including the mountain indigenous peoples and the plain-land indigenous peoples point to those who lived in the mountains or plains and were ruled by the Japanese and Kuomintang regimes more recently, without the aforementioned historical experience (Yan and Zhang, 2022).

It is impossible to partake in their own national politics if their central government do not even officially recognise them in the way they understand their own identity. Even though there are 16 nations that have been recognised by the state as mentioned before, some indigenous people who are classified as current indigenous groups are not satisfied with those sorts of recognition for their identity. Meanwhile, some others are unable to have an identity recognition that they are self-recognised. Consequently, aboriginal cultural revival and ethnic name rectification (原住民族正名, *Yuán zhù mínzú zhèngmíng*) have been unfolding for several decades. The Status Act for Indigenous Peoples (原住民身分法, *Yuán zhù mǐn shēn fèn fǎ*) of the Republic of China was enacted in 2001 which aiming to give aboriginals an official



status in the country (*Status Act for Indigenous Peoples*, 2001). Although the official recognition and protection of aboriginal identity have since entered a new era, the legal restrictions, for instance, the necessary condition for recognising as indigenous identity is that ‘*permanent residents of the mountain/ plain-land administrative zone before the recovery of Taiwan, moreover census registration records show individual or an immediate kin of individual is of indigenous peoples descent*’ (*Status Act for Indigenous Peoples*, 2001) have made some certain nationalities unable to obtain a formal recognition. The legal requirement is that residents must have lived in the areas specified in the provisions before the restoration of Taiwan in order to be formally registered as aboriginal identity. Some indigenous peoples are forced to embark on the road of fighting for their aboriginal identity and relevant social welfare (Yan and Zhang, 2022). The status quo for the recognition of indigenous identity is that some existing indigenous groups are of Austronesian peoples who have their own languages, culture, traditions et cetera, but they were not registered during the Japanese colonial period. So that when they are applying for formal indigenous status at the moment, to some extent they cannot qualify for the requirements of relevant institutions, that is the Council of Indigenous Peoples in this case, of the law. A representative instance can be illustrated here. After two years-long deliberations in the case of Siraya (one of the aboriginal nationalities of Austronesian peoples in Taiwan but the law have not accepted their identity yet) ethnically aboriginal identity, the Constitutional Court of R.O.C. (Taiwan) has delivered its verdict in 2022 that the relevant provisions that stipulate the recognition of aboriginal identity are inconsistent with the values enshrined in the Constitution that all citizens shall be equal and their freedom and rights should be guaranteed by the law and the relevant provisions need to be amended. The expectation here is that Siraya ethnicity might obtain their own identity officially after the amendment is complete. In addition, as long as they meet certain specific conditions, aboriginal peoples who have not yet obtained formal status may apply for verification of aboriginal identity (*111 年憲判字第 17 號 (Constitutional Judgement No.17 of 2022)*, 2022). Those indigenous people have struggled with the same political rights as others, such as mountain aboriginals and plain-land aboriginals, in addition to asking for their identity to get recognition by the state. Currently, only aboriginals who are recognised by the Law as mountain aboriginals or plain-land aboriginals have guaranteed legislative seats (Article 4 of Additional Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China, 2005).



6.1.2 Indigenous Identity in Society

The hardship of aboriginals in social life is also partly caused by discrimination and lack of acceptance of their indigenous identity. Originating from the forced migration of those in power during the colonial period, mass migration of the aboriginals still occurs today due to various reasons including lack of job opportunities, threatening the livelihood, and the deficiency of amenities in the original aboriginal settlement. For those who migrate to the city, they have a specific title called 都市原住民 (*Dūshì yuán zhùmín*, urban indigenous people) (Su, 2007). Contrasted with the prettified rhetoric of migration as the modernisation and progressiveness of aboriginals, those urban aboriginals paradoxically are facing the plight of health. According to the statistics from the Council of Indigenous Peoples in 2019, Zhu illustrated that over 40% of indigenous peoples living in the metropolis in the research about the health status of the urban indigenous peoples. Zhu stated that beneath the seemingly gradual integration of aboriginals and modernisation is the plight of urban indigenous health. In the past decade, aboriginal life expectancy has remained 8-9 years below the national average. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Health and Welfare has continued to promote relevant project caring for the health of aboriginals including urban aboriginals, there is many challenges in practice especially when it turns to the local government. Even though the proportion of the urban indigenous people is large, most of them have chosen to not settle for the rest of life in their current residential metropolis due to their psychological dependency on tribes which means the householding registration is still in the clan where they come from. It would cause difficulty in implementing relevant social welfare and health programmes to cover all of target groups (Zhu, 2019). When the authority anticipates offering assistance, they have to be strenuous and even might not get a result, on top of that it is hard to look forward to those indigenous people who reached out passively to participate in national politics actively.

In the interaction between indigenous tribes and the external environment, a paternalistic attitude has existed towards aboriginals. This phenomenon is imposed on the indigenous community by a society dominated by a non-indigenous majority, which defines what the aboriginals need, while their real demands are rarely valued (Munsterhjelm, 2010). The stereotypes imposed on aboriginals and the constant expression that they need to be taken care of have led to portray them as the



underdog in society. This weakness is not just the one that generates sympathy, but a faintness that can be consumed by certain collectives. The self-identity of indigenous people has been adversely affected by such external presentations which can lead to a misperception among the aboriginals (Munsterhjelm, 2010).

At the same time, it is hard to hear any indigenous people call themselves 臺灣人 (*Táiwān rén*, Taiwanese) which is a common self-title in contemporary Taiwan for non-aboriginals. They generally prefer 原住民 (*yuán zhù mǐn*, indigenous people) instead of Taiwanese as the self-claim. This atmosphere shows the fact that indigenous people do not have too much sense as a citizen of the country. Furthermore, there is a blank in the academic field about how Taiwanese indigenous people view their national identity instead of their ethnic identity. The author cannot even find any media material about how aboriginals viewed their sense of national responsibility right the moment. When looking at the relationship between indigenous identity and society, many discriminations uncovered and some of them are full of anger. A common question from non-aboriginals in routine life is why the aboriginals can get extra points of grades at the schooling level (Taiwan's education system is based on points of grades, which is the case in most Asian countries and regions) (Li, 2019). To follow up the Han Chinese-dominated multicultural society still makes indigenous people disadvantaged groups, and apparently, some people do not think so. Although society emphasises the significance of multiculturalism and conservation awareness, the main education system still favours the majority. Undeniably, this is an aspect that needs to be maintained improving in Taiwanese society for a real multicultural environment (Li, 2019).

In addition to identity recognition as the basis, the revival of aboriginal culture should be another essential element of aboriginal political participation. Notwithstanding culture and politics may seem to be two concepts in parallel, the revival and promotion of aboriginal culture is a natural respect for indigenous people as nations, and with it will follow with the political inclusion (Hsieh and Lakaw, 2019).

6.1.3 Indigenous Identity in Politics

Since the democratisation of Taiwanese society, transitional justice has gradually unfolded under the influence and urging of the international community. It is



demanded compensation for the adversely colonial and oppressed history of Taiwanese aboriginals in several means including occupied property and territory must be returned, the torture of the body and the loss of freedom and life must be compensated as well as the truth and history must be fully disclosed. These themes are the principled goals of transitional justice (*什麼是轉型正義 Transitional Justice*, n.d.). The implementation of transitional justice conveys a significant signal to indigenous people that they are paid attention right the moment by the nation and their unjustified past could be honestly redressed. The latest vital action by the government about the processing of transitional justice was the current President of the Republic of China Tsai Ing-wen apologising to indigenous peoples on behalf of the government in 2016. It was a huge step regardless of for indigenous rights movements or the official expression of regret at the national level. This substantial public apology, in addition to fully explaining how the indigenous people were oppressed, assimilated, and unfairly treated in their traumatic history, also included that the appeals of the aboriginal movements were not promptly and effectively resolved by the government after Taiwan's democratisation. It is undeniable that this speech is reasonable, optimistic and moving (*President Tsai apologizes to indigenous peoples on behalf of government*, 2016). However, the implementation process and outcomes of transitional justice are questionable, which causes discontent and dissatisfaction among some indigenous groups. Scholars who have done research on transitional justice believe that it is mere rhetoric if the term 'transitional justice' is commonly labelled as reconciliation between the government and indigenous without the consent of aboriginals of forgiveness. Additionally, if people are unaware of how the sovereignty of indigenous people was wiped out in the course of history, then it is unable to truly restore the Taiwanese sovereignty to every people living on this land (Shih, 2014). How to deal with commercial interested parties exploiting the natural resources-rich residential land of aboriginals and handing the land back to indigenous peoples is one of the primary controversies (Xu, 2017). Furthermore, the role of the media must not be overlooked. People would get the basic knowledge about relevant policies has caused what sort of social facts from reporting coverage of the media. Meanwhile, the media should avoid sensationalist reporting and be composed of various perspectives. It is assumed that the media plays the role of communicating accurate facts, and inaccuracies in reporting can mislead the public. Thusly, how the media views indigenous people



and how they are reported by media are vital for how general citizens consider and realise aboriginals (Chen, 2020).

6.2 Theoretically Examination

The upcoming discussion in this section will attempt to solve the fourth research question about theoretically interpreting macro- and micro-perspectives associated with indigenous peoples in society, politics and themselves.

6.2.1 Liberalism and Constructivism

The most fundamental connection between liberalism and this dissertation is that liberalism was founded as a confrontation with colonialism which has heavily affected the current political predicament of indigenous people (Carlisle, 2007, p.279). When state proclaims that liberalism as one of the pursuing goals or status, this gives all citizens, regardless of their beliefs and identities, a guarantee from government that social justice and basic human rights are assured (Carlisle, 2007, p.282). However, the current political situation of the Taiwanese aboriginals makes it less liberal than the ideal status.

By constructivism, one thing worth emphasising is the core that constructivism places on identity. In addition to identity is important for aboriginals to participate in politics as section 6.1 analysed, it plays a significant role at the theoretical level as well. Flockhart (2016) illustrated that identity affects the actions of performers especially self-recognition of identity (Flockhart, 2016, p.87). A simple instance can be used to verify the point of view of Flockhart. When the aboriginals were forced to abandon their aboriginal identity and culture during the colonial period, that is to say, in the process of assimilation in the social environment, aboriginal generations became less aware of and confused about their identity in society, which caused undoubtedly some descendants of indigenous peoples no longer have a sense of belonging to the identity of their ancestors (Qiu, 2022). As a result, this has made it difficult to gain the support and response of these descendants in some indigenous struggle for their aboriginal identity in contemporary times.

6.2.2 Colonialism/ Postcolonialism

Colonialism can be interpreted as the manifestation of egoism and power-centrism as well. The essence of colonisation is the coveting and plundering of colonial resources. During this process, the interests and rights of aboriginals are



disregarded. Instead, the conquerors' own objectives are the guiding force behind their actions which is a typical manifestation of egoism. Why the conquerors are able to achieve their aims can precisely be explained by power-centrism. It is accurately due to the armed power that conquerors have is larger than the aboriginals and may have more advanced technological power as well. The combination of various forces is sufficient to defeat the aboriginals in the business of resources and land grabbing (Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2016, P.36).

The effect of colonial history by intruders lasts a long duration until nowadays not only reflecting the loss of land tenure which has deprived the access and control of the territories but also perplexing indigenous people about self-identity (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2018). All along the period when different regimes colonised the land of Taiwan, there were distinctions between aboriginal titles. During the Qing dynasty, the indigenous peoples within the ruling area were called 'Shufan (熟番, which means they were more interacted with colonists compared with other indigenous peoples)', while those outside the ruling area were called 'Shengfan (生番, which means aboriginals who had less interaction with colonists)' which sounded containing more unknown and barbaric sense compared with 'Shufan (熟番)' in Chinese language context. In the course of time of imperial Japan's rule, there was no difference between 'Shufan (熟番)' and 'islanders (refers to the people who were habitants at that time, including Hoklo (福佬, *Fú lǎo*, the southern Han Chinese subgroups), Hakka (客家, *Kèjiā*, another Han Chinese subgroups), and other groups)', and only dealt with the issue of 'Shengfan (生番)' who were considered as uncivilised and had to be naturalised as the islanders by managing and suppressing (Yan and Zhang, 2022).

The high-pressure colonial assimilation policies were processed from 1906 onwards by the imperial Japanese regime. By appeasing policies such as establishing educational institutes for indigenous children and setting up FuKen Agency (撫墾, *Fǔ kěn shǔ*, is mainly responsible for the administration of the aboriginals and the development of mountain and forest resources as well as preventing being attacked by aboriginals) near the mountains to keep indigenous people off the Japanese residency in the outset of the ruling, evolved into the forcibly assimilated process. Incontrovertibly some of the policies at that time were considered ethically namely



setting up medical stations to keep indigenous hygiene and teaching them farming to change indigenous mobile way of life. However, most of the policy formulation was for the convenience of colonial rule like coercing indigenous peoples who used to alpine living environment to move to lower altitude areas with hot and humid weather which resulted getting infectious diseases. The fundamental reason for those policies was on the basis of the thoughts that aboriginals were too barbaric and needed to be assimilated into civilised people which referred to the Japanese at that time (Dai, n.d.).

In the early years of the Kuomintang's autocratic rule when it took over Taiwan from 1945 onwards which is the aforementioned martial law in section 1.2.2, Sinicisation was the mainstream policy. Against this social background, aboriginal identity was treated extremely and discriminatorily. This mentality persisted over an extended period with the effect that some descendants of aboriginals chose to renounce themselves as aboriginals even when they could obtain a formal aboriginal identity. They have left their tribes for several generations and have no identification with their communities. It is far from enough motivation to register their own indigenous identity only with the bloodline (Yan and Zhang, 2022).

In the post-colonial era, even though the outset of the post-colonial period is still ambiguous in academia, decolonising the mind can be a foremost topic worth considering. Taiwanisation as a more specific concept of nationalism in this case fulfilled a key function for the current indigenous situation in the post-colonial period. Severe suppression of aboriginal culture and language permanent degradation of the dignity of indigenous people due to the refusal of the culture and beliefs they have carried for thousands of years (Hsieh and Lakaw, 2019). Another challenge is that for people who have not experienced a similar extent of oppression or any oppression in this way, is hard to have sympathy with indigenous people (Loomba, 2015, p.29). The author even cannot find any supportive coverage or articles online. But a few instances of non-aboriginals supporting the indigenous peoples' actions about achieving their due rights were found in academic articles (Friedman, 2018).

6.2.3 Multiculturalism

The safeguard that has been conferred on aboriginal cultures today is part of multicultural movements. However, as the author briefly mentioned in the previous



content, some proponents of multiculturalism in Taiwanese society use it as a strategy against a boost of Taiwanese nationalism. The initial formation of Taiwan's multicultural surroundings was not deliberate, but an unanticipated outgrowth of other purposive policies. Friedman (2018) deems the existence of multiculturalism as a sugar-coat that buries the actual societal issues around ethnicity and the aftermath of colonial history (Friedman, 2018).

Integration is often used to interpret the expectation and is viewed as the process of implementing multiculturalism when it is given attention and practically applied in policymaking and social actions. Yet the procedure of integration to some extent can be considered as assimilation. The concepts of assimilation and integration are usually debated in immigration studies and integration is also applied in the rhetoric of policies. Multicultural society requires incorporating various groups and their culture as partial elements of the community (Schneider and Crul, 2010). When implementing integration, however, adhering to the respect for the locally inherent culture and numerical superiority of those who promote it can easily develop into a phenomenon of assimilation. In Taiwan's society, when harmony and stability were aimed as a goal by the whole government-leading society, variety means cultural conflict and is harmful to pursuing multicultural purpose (《社論》族群文化的同化與多元 (*the Editorial: The Assimilation and Diversity of Ethnic Cultures*), 2009). People or governments make things look less atrocious by applying terms and methods that are more appropriate and seem acceptable (Crepaz, 2006, p.93).

It is evident that if multiculturalism is ubiquitous existence in society, it will impact the indigenous disposition to partake in politics. The turnout rate in the aboriginal constituency elections was much lower than that of the general regional constituency elections, which seems to have created a consequence of political alienation. The researchers found that the requirement to return to the place of household registration to vote during the election was one of the reasons hindering the willingness to vote for many aboriginals who live in other places. People abstain from voting after weighing the time, energy and economic costs it would take to return to the place of household registration and the significance of this vote (Pao and Chou, 2015). The uprooting of the aboriginals is caused by many reasons, but it can be inferred from this that the imperfection of a multicultural society is one of the demonstrations. When the aboriginals are unable to obtain a better quality of life



and job opportunities on the tribes due to the society still has its cultural preference, then the aboriginals would move to a place that is more friendly to their way of life to live (Xu, n.d.). Some of them became the urban indigenous people then as aforementioned. The relation between the regulation of members of the Legislative Yuan and the political participation of aboriginals will be examined further in the next section.

6.2.4 Representative Democracy & Deliberative Democracy

Representative democracy pays attention to the legitimacy and necessity of the procedure of elections of representatives in the national political body (Urbinati, 2011, p.24). Yet, it is challenging to ensure impartiality and compliance in the implementation of elections. As mentioned above, some aboriginals refrain from voting after having considered several conditions, which will make a limit of citizens who should be represented by the finally elected representatives. There are many criticisms of representative democracy in Taiwan such as the legality and qualification of representatives, the eligibility of being elected, the complexity of the law about removing public servants, and the bias in favour of the public servants in current relevant laws and regulations which consequently leads to people question the democratic system in the country (Guan, 2014; *Civil Servants Election And Recall Act of the Republic of China*, 1980, Article 45). The misconduct of implementing representative democracy has not only prevented the voice of the people from being heard in the inherited feature of this political form it should have been but has even isolated the voice of the people in the appearance of the promising reputation of representative democracy. People even call it directly ‘漏洞百出的台灣民主制度 (*Lòudòng bǎichū de táiwān mínhǔ zhìdù*, a badly flawed Taiwanese democracy)’ (Guan, 2014). It is conceivable that it would be more severe for the few indigenous legislative seats when many disadvantages of such a system for representative democracy have appeared.

Taiwanese current deliberative democracy is a crucial means to make indigenous policies tend to be better. Deliberative democracy in Taiwan complements the omissions produced by representative democracy. In comparison with the establishment and revision of policies are determined solely by voting and deferring to the majority, it offers the public the possibility of expressing their views and opinions on policies, which is likely to be mutually discussed and communicated to



reach a consensus in this consultative background. Those opinions and thoughts might be gratuitously compromised in representative democratic implementation (Chen, 2020). This political mechanism does not only refer to the official deliberation procedure in the legislative process and courts but also include informal discussion and communication in the civil sphere. Scholars pointed out the deliberation occurring within indigenous tribes and between indigenous people and external people aims to complete an effective deliberative mechanism to reach participation in national politics (Fan, 2021).

Irrespective of representative democracy or deliberative democracy, the core is consistently to make a democratic country and society. Individuals are given the right to make self-governing and participate in the process of policymaking being the primacy of democracy (Chen, 2020; Keutgen, 2021). Coupled with the academic field recognising the indispensability of both political mechanisms in Taiwanese society, the general people have also increasingly understood the significance of two systems complementing each other (Lin, 2009). Although the legislator seats for indigenous people is only six for now, far from representing the whole various indigenous groups, the situation would improve a lot if processing deliberation included indigenous people properly. Implementing the outcomes from deliberation with the voting course of representative procedure to bridge the gap between indigenous people and institutions is what the national political mechanism can improve the expectation of aboriginal participation and representation in the country.

6.2.5 National Global Political Status and Domestic Politics

In the background of globalisation, the presence in politics of Taiwanese indigenous groups is not only the domestic issues within their nation but also associated with the international community. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, for example, is one of the bodies of the United Nations aiming to deal with current indigenous issues. Indigenous tribes worldwide can bring their predicament in politics, economy, education and so on to the forum to seek resolutions (*Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, n.d.). However, due to the special political status of Taiwan, Taiwanese aboriginal delegations have been facing many obstacles by the People's Republic of China (PRC) led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Munsterhjelm, 2010; Teyra, 2015). Given that indigenous affairs cover all parts of



the world, there are very few relevant international bodies capable of organising nearly all indigenous groups worldwide except for the United Nations (UN). States are able to participate in any conferences held by the UN or suborganisations of the UN as long as they are entirely sovereign countries. Just for this regulation, it is hindering the engagement of the indigenous groups that came from the Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan) since it has not yet been officially recognised by the UN as having complete sovereignty over the land (Winkler, 2012). As a place having its own political system and governing itself but the majority of countries around the globe have not recognised its national sovereignty yet, this struggle reflects ultimately on the possibility of the Taiwanese indigenous population communicating with other indigenous groups in the international community.

It is rare to see appeals from Taiwanese indigenous people illustrating any demands related to the political arguments between ROC and PRC. The media expressed this as a secondary consideration for Taiwanese aboriginals which they have insufficient time to think of it at present before their primary demands in the country have been resolved. Although rare, it is not absent. As a response to a speech by the president of the People's Republic of China in early 2019, Taiwanese indigenous people wrote a public speech representing all Taiwanese aboriginals, at least they say so, to claim that their motherland 'doesn't belong to China'. Simultaneously, they showed clear values in this aboriginal speech including being humble to the land and mutual existence with other cultures, which correspond to common indigenous values. Some indigenous people would hardly consider too much about the political party of the People's Republic of China compared to the Taiwanese political parties. Aboriginal pessimistically considered regardless of which political party is in charge of this country, indigenous people are always marginalised. They expressed concurrently that freedom of speech in Taiwan is better than the place across the strait (Aspinwall, 2019).

The aforementioned public apology by the current president of the Republic of China, some believe that it also had a political goal in favour of the present ruling party. In that speech, President Tsai Ing-wen illustrated the significance of transitional justice and on behalf of the government apologised for the failed implementation of relevant laws for the unfair treatment of indigenous people which can be seen as the failure of the previous ruling party, Kuomintang, who is also the



vital rival for the current ruling party (Pao, 2016; Aspinwall, 2019). Some also suspect that transitional justice for Indigenous peoples is being exploited politically and not mainly for the benefit of Indigenous peoples (Pao, 2016).

7 Conclusion

In this section, I will return to my research questions and answer them in the current scenario. When it comes to the first question about the descriptions of indigenous identity in the law and its evolution, the identity of the Taiwanese indigenous peoples has been considered two aspects of recognition all the time. One is official identification which means how it illustrates in the statute. Another is the public and social perception of indigenous peoples. The author finds that the concept of aboriginals in the law first followed the discriminatory usage and designation in the colonial period, and then gradually underwent a more accurate and morally neutral definition as well as respectful to and acceptable by indigenous peoples in the process of democratisation.

For the second research question about the correlation between indigenous identity and society, the author has found that the integration of aboriginals and various colonists has been a difficult issue to reconcile since the outset of the long colonial converse period. Particularly under the violent assimilation policies of the colonial regimes, even though some colonists are not the enforcers of the policies, they were seen as one with the colonial regime by virtue of their status, and so the aboriginals resented both those who only lived in the colony and those who enforced the colonial regimes. On the other hand, the descriptions of the aboriginals as barbaric by the colonial regimes were also generally seen as a need for civilisation and would inadvertently entrench a perception of indigenous peoples that would be perpetuated in society. This has led to ignorance and invisible discrimination against aboriginals persisting even after the democratisation of Taiwanese society. As a result, the integration of indigenous peoples into modern society has been fraught with problems.

In relation to the third research question, ideally and reasonably, national politics should involve all citizens including indigenous peoples. However, there still has plenty of room to improve the political systems to incorporate indigenous people as the host of the land. The current state of affairs in relation to indigenous



participation in national politics is that there are inadequate legislative seats for indigenous peoples, and more urgently, is that the official identity of indigenous peoples is the necessary condition to participate in the policy-making process. Thusly, the essential factor for the predicament of aboriginal participation in national politics comes back to the recognition of aboriginal identity. Meanwhile, there is a need for enhanced action in transitional justice in response to the mental and physical toll of the bitter colonial period and the encroachment on aboriginal lands and cultures. Nonetheless, it is crucial to avoid being used by political parties to cause secondary harm to aboriginals.

Considering the usage of political science theories, as background theory, liberalism offered a reasonable explanation of why the political rights of aboriginals should be paid vital attention to and why the following analysis kept mentioning the significance of equally treating everyone. Constructivism clarified why discourse can be used to understand this topic as well as why textual materials are relatively reliable and feasible. According to the Taiwanese society, politics and the status quo of indigenous peoples, those practical theories namely (post)colonialism, multiculturalism, representative democracy and deliberative democracy helped to interpret the reality logically and rationally as well as all of them are common theories for analysing the transformation of certain areas from former colonial rule to democratic societies. For instance, (post) colonialism offered insight into how consistent discrimination appears and lasts and the consequence applied to the multicultural society clarified the paradox of the concept of multiculturalism and the current situation of Taiwanese multicultural society. Yet, those theories were not suitable for the topic of partisan battles which had been mentioned a bit in this thesis. Moreover, those were useless when analysing indigenous political predicament in the global context. The limitation is that most theories determined for this dissertation focus on specific situations and thusly they fell short of capturing the state of the complexity of aboriginals regardless of societal or political level. Perspectives were slightly narrow to comprehensively grasp how several phenomena occur during the same period.

Due to the time and words limits of this dissertation, there still have some meaningful and inspiring topics related to the presentation and participation of the Taiwanese indigenous people in national politics that deserve to study such as a



further discussion on how a combination of political systems of representative democracy and deliberative democracy can be applied better on the Taiwanese political mechanism, or research specifically on the national global dilemma of status affect how extent on indigenous people.



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