

The Determinants of Public Attitudes toward the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan

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Abstract

This article investigates the current attitudes of the Taiwanese public toward the rights of aborigines (Yuanzhumin), a neglected topic both in Taiwan and throughout the world. The theoretical literature on ethnic politics suggests that such attitudes might be rooted in one's level of education, ethnic group conflict and partisanship, intergroup contact, and/or religion-like ideology (Confucian values). Using data from the 2006 Taiwan Social Image Survey I and our 2009 privately commissioned poll on support for the rights of Taiwanese aborigines, we test these four theories and find that higher education increases support for aboriginal rights. The results confirm the ethno-partisanship model for 2006 but not for 2009. Conversely, the percentage of Yuanzhumin living in a region boosted hostility toward them in 2009 but not in 2006. We likewise discover that two Confucian values (family loyalty and social hierarchies) have no statistically significant effect on attitudes toward Yuanzhumin. A third key Confucian value, social harmony, appears to increase support for aboriginal rights. Surprisingly, Confucian values seem to pose no hindrance to the advancement of ethnic minorities' rights and may, in fact, even promote them.

Key words: Taiwan, ethnic politics, partisanship, aborigines, indigenous people, Confucian values, intergroup contact, public opinion.

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The Master was wishing to go and live among the nine wild tribes of the east. Someone said, “They are rude. How can you do such a thing?” The Master said, “If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?”

—Confucius, *Analects*

I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land to change barbarians, but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians.

—Mencius, *Mencius*

Among the disadvantaged minorities around the world, probably no group fares as poorly as aboriginal or indigenous people. They represent an estimated 4.5 percent of the global population, but they account for about 10 percent of the world’s poor. Indigenous people also have lower rates of educational attainment and are more likely to suffer disease and discrimination than other groups in society.¹ In recent years, the political rights and legal status of aborigines have become a contentious political issue in various parts of the world. The debate involves such diverse questions as land claims, discrimination against native groups, linguistic rights, official government recognition of indigenous peoples, and political representation, to name a few. The United Nations waded into the controversy in 2007, when it passed the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples and subsequently established the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The literature on aboriginal rights has grown accordingly.² With few exceptions, most of this work focuses on the historical, cultural, and political factors that explain contemporary policies toward indigenous

¹ “Indigenous Peoples: Still among the Poorest of the Poor,” Policy Brief of the World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINDPEOPLE/Resources/407801-1271860301656/HDNEN_indigenous_clean_0421.pdf (accessed April 4, 2011).

² S. James Anaya, *International Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Aspen Publishers, 2009); Michael Asch, *Home and Native Land: Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution* (Toronto: Methuen, 1984); Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Joanne Barker, *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestations and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Tom Flanagan, Christopher Alcantara, and André Le Dressay, *Beyond the Indian Act: Restoring Aboriginal Property Rights* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010); Paul Havemann, ed., *Indigenous Peoples’ Rights in Australia, Canada & New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999); Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton, and Will Sanders, eds., *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Paul Keal, *European Conquest and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The Moral Backwardness of International Society* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ronald T. Libbey, *Hawke’s Law: The Politics of Mining and Aboriginal Land Rights in Australia* (State College, PA: Penn State Press, 1992); and Rachel Sieder, *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

groups rather than providing a statistical overview of the status of aborigines worldwide.³ What is still largely missing from the research is an analysis of the causes of public opinion toward native peoples. Indigenous groups face popular discrimination around the world, but little exists that explains the root causes of those negative attitudes.

This article focuses on this lacuna in the literature by examining the factors that explain public support for indigenous rights in Taiwan. For various reasons, Taiwan is an ideal country in which to study this question. The island has a relatively large, well-defined, and officially recognized indigenous population. A perennial problem in studying indigenous peoples is how to define the term. The United Nations has never adopted a single definition, and countries vary significantly in how, or whether, they use the concept or officially recognize indigenous groups. Taiwan, however, has both accepted the term and used it to grant formal governmental recognition to fourteen tribes representing 494,000 indigenous individuals, or about 2 percent of the island's total population.⁴ By contrast, the People's Republic of China (PRC) officially recognizes fifty-five minority nationalities, representing 8 percent of the mainland Chinese population, or some 106 million people. However, as one study notes, the ethnic categories used in the PRC "do not map cleanly onto various notions of indigenous populations," leading to a "disconnect" among those concepts.⁵ The same is true in Vietnam, where government policy is directed toward a diverse set of fifty-three ethnic groups.⁶ In short, assessing attitudes toward aborigines in Taiwan is not confused with attitudes toward ethnic minorities generally, as might be the case in China or Vietnam.

Asia is an appropriate region to study this topic because it is home to about 80 percent of the world's indigenous peoples, according to the World Bank.⁷ Given this relative prominence, the results from Asia are quite possibly relevant to what one would find about popular attitudes toward indigenous peoples in other parts of the world. Because one of the questions we plan to address in this study is whether support for Confucian values has any impact on attitudes toward indigenous people, Taiwan is an ideal country to test this

³ Gillette Hall and Harry A. Patrinos, *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America* (London: Palgrave, 2006), and Gillette Hall and Harry A. Patrinos, eds., *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Development: A Global Study* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁴ "Taiwan's Indigenous People up 2.05 Percent," *China Post*, February 15, 2009, www.chinapost.com.tw (accessed December 15, 2010).

⁵ Emily Hannum and Meiyan Wang, "China: A Case Study of Rapid Poverty Reduction," in *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Development: A Global Study*, ed. Gillette Hall and Harry A. Patrinos (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁶ Hai-Anh H. Dang, "Vietnam: A Widening Poverty Gap for Ethnic Minorities," in *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Development: A Global Study*, ed. Gillette Hall and Harry A. Patrinos (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁷ "Indigenous Peoples: Still among the Poorest of the Poor."

link because it is both Confucian and has an indigenous population. Findings from Taiwan can be suggestive of what one might find in other East Asian countries such as Vietnam, China, and Japan, which are also Confucian and have a significant indigenous population. Taiwan is also essential for our purposes because it is a liberal democracy that offers an open environment for public-opinion research.

Similarly, Taiwan is a unique and fascinating place to analyze the question of how aboriginal issues fit within the larger literature on ethnic politics.⁸ Depending on how one defines “ethnic group,” a highly controversial question in the field, Taiwan can either be understood as ethnically monolithic or somewhat diverse.⁹ Roughly 98 percent of the island’s population is “Han Chinese,” with the other 2 percent consisting of indigenous people. However, the “Han” on the island remain deeply divided between “mainlanders”/ waishengren [外省人], those who emigrated from China in 1949 and their descendents (currently 14 percent of the population), and “native Taiwanese”/ bendiren [本地人], those whose ancestors typically arrived well before 1949 (84 percent of the population). Further complicating the Taiwanese scene is that the ethnic-minority mainlanders maintained political and military control over the island for fifty years. Since the 2000 presidential election, the mainlander-native Taiwanese split has been the primary political cleavage. Where do indigenous groups fit into this picture? In many respects, their situation parallels that of colonized, smaller indigenous groups in a country such as authoritarian South Africa. There, the numerical white minority tried to maintain power by forming strategic coalitions with certain indigenous African groups against others.¹⁰ In a similar vein, the political behavior of mainlander and indigenous Taiwanese matches the ethnic mobilization model that predicts that a minority group will form a coalition with another minority against the ethnic majority.¹¹ For reasons that we detail below, indigenous groups have

⁸ The literature on ethnic politics is voluminous. Some of the works that are relevant to our study include, Bernard Groffman and Robert Stockwell, “Institutional Design in Plural Societies: Mitigating Ethnic Conflict and Fostering Stable Democracy,” Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/16s1c0mt> (accessed April 4, 2011); Robert Ted Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993); Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); David Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Susan Olzak, “Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 355-374; and Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2000).

⁹ Kanchan Chandra, “What Is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?” *American Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 397-424.

¹⁰ Shula Marks, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987).

¹¹ Joanne Nagel and Susan Olzak, “Ethnic Mobilization in New and Old States: An Extension of the Competition Model,” *Social Problems* 30, no. 2 (1982):127-143.

historically aligned with mainlanders. Moreover, ethnic-politics models also note that numerical strength is a political resource and that smaller groups run the risk of political marginalization.¹² Probably because of their relatively small size, indigenous groups in Taiwan have not been particularly successful at bringing their interests to the forefront of the political process. When it has served their purpose, nonindigenous political leaders have responded to aboriginal demands by, for example, changing their official name and setting aside six seats in the Legislative Yuan for members of native peoples. For the most part, however, indigenous groups have not yet achieved their ultimate goals on political autonomy and land claims.

Historical Background

While political control of Taiwan has changed hands frequently over the centuries, what is essentially unchanged is a history of political exploitation, economic extortion, and cultural chauvinism against the Yuanzhumin by whomever was in power. By most accounts, the Taiwanese aborigines are a non-Han, Austronesian people who began arriving on the island in 4000 B.C.¹³ Dutch colonialism of the island in the early seventeenth century and the subsequent arrival of large numbers of Han Chinese brought the Yuanzhumin into contact with outsiders for the first time on a large scale. When the Han gained political control of the island near the century's end, they brought with them cultural assumptions about the superiority of their culture and the inferiority of all non-Han groups, including the Yuanzhumin. Han identity was also closely tied to a set of Confucian values and practices and was reinforced by cultural traditions and political behavior.¹⁴

The quotations from Confucius and Mencius at the beginning of this article highlight both the presumption of Han cultural superiority and the idea that, in theory at least, outsider groups could acquire this identity if they adopted the right set of beliefs.¹⁵ In practice, however, the Han expropriated any arable land occupied by the Yuanzhumin and “assimilated” them only in the sense that they absorbed them and tried to eliminate their traditional ways of life. Many of these so-called “plains aborigines” would eventually be incorporated into

¹² John Crowley, “The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities,” *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 1 (2001): 99-121.

¹³ Gary Marvin Davison and Barbara E. Reed, *Culture and Customs in Taiwan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁴ John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600-1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Wang Fu-chang, *Dangdai Taiwan shehui de zuqun xiangxiang* [Ethnic imagination in contemporary Taiwan] (Taipei: Socio Publishing, 2003), 104-112; and Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities*, 24.

Han society and lose some of their tribal identities. Those Yuanzhumin who resisted this economic and cultural penetration were forced into exile in the mountains; public policy and cultural values drove a further wedge between Han and the so-called “mountain aborigines.” During the Qing Dynasty, for example, intermarriage between Han and non-Han was officially banned, making it virtually impossible for Yuanzhumin to change their legal identity.¹⁶ Possibly because they were treated as outsiders and they were looking for allies who might help them compete against the Han, the Yuanzhumin converted in large numbers to Christianity when Western missionaries came to Taiwan in the middle of the nineteenth century. Today, more than 90 percent of Yuanzhumin are practicing Christians.¹⁷ By identifying themselves with Christianity, indigenous groups could, at least symbolically, reject the narrative that viewed them as semi-barbarians.¹⁸

The conditions for the Yuanzhumin worsened during Japanese control of Taiwan during the first half of the twentieth century. The Japanese used their military might to “pacify the mountain peoples” and even established reservations with electrified fences to separate the Yuanzhumin from the Han Chinese and Japanese who also were living on the island. Occasionally, as in the 1930 Wushe incident (霧社事件), Taiwanese aborigines used violence to oppose Japanese rule. Possibly because of their exploitation at the hands of both the Japanese and the Taiwanese, the Yuanzhumin generally did not resist the immigration of large numbers of “mainlanders” in the 1940s and 1950s and the eventual political control of the island by the Kuomintang (KMT).¹⁹

KMT policy toward the Yuanzhumin was never as hostile as their predecessors’, but nor was it particularly enlightened, at least initially. Government policies under Chiang Kai-shek’s party, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, actively sought to foster the cultural assimilation of aboriginal people. The use of Mandarin in public schools, an educational curriculum

¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁷ Hsieh Shih-Chung, “Tourism, Formulation of Cultural Tradition, and Ethnicity: A Study of the ‘Dayan Identity’ of the Wulai Ayatal,” in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, ed. Steven Harell and Huang Chün-chieh (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1994), 184-201; Shelley Rigger, “What a Difference a Decade Makes: Impressions from 1983 and 1991,” *Issues & Studies* 40, nos. 3/4 (September/December 2004): 440-444; and Wang Songshan, *Taiwan Yuanzhumin de shehui yu wenhua* [Taiwanese aborigines’ society and culture] (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe, 2001), 81-98.

¹⁸ Whether Yuanzhumin *consciously* converted to Christianity primarily as a way to resist Han cultural domination is a separate question, however.

¹⁹ Fujii Shizue, *Taiwan Yuanzhumin shi: Zhengce pian (san)* [The history of Formosan aborigines: Policy formulation, vol. 3] (Nantou, Taiwan: Historical Research Commission of Taiwan Province, 2007), 1-154; Murray A. Rubinstein, “The Presbyterian Church in the Formation of Taiwan’s Democratic Society,” in *Religious Organizations and Democratization*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng and Deborah A. Brown (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 109-135; and Yu-Lan Chiang, “Japanese Policies toward the Formosan Aborigines: The Wu-she Incident of 1930” (MA thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1974).

steeped in pro-KMT ideology, and the promotion of Chinese culture and history at the expense of any consideration of native cultures helped to speed the disappearance of a number of indigenous languages and promoted discrimination against aborigines.²⁰ Nonetheless, the government's policy gradually became much more supportive of the political and cultural interests of the island's indigenous peoples. In 1994, the government officially recognized those groups as "Yuanzhumin [原住民]" (original inhabitants), instead of using the derogatory term "Shanbao [山胞]" (mountain compatriots). Two years later, the KMT established a Council of Aboriginal Affairs in the Executive Yuan. Beginning in 1998, the curriculum in Taiwan's public schools was changed to provide for more study of aborigines.²¹ A minimum of six seats is reserved for aboriginal representatives in the Legislative Yuan, three for lowland aborigines and three for highland aborigines.²² In 2005, the Legislative Yuan passed the Aboriginal Basic Law, which guarantees the autonomy of the nation's indigenous peoples and provides government resources for the development of a self-governing system for aboriginal groups. In promoting the "subsistence and development of inter-ethnic relations based on co-existence,"²³ the Aboriginal Basic Law marked a decisive break from the assimilation policies of the past.

While current policies toward Yuanzhumin are certainly more supportive than in the past, native people do not seem to be benefiting socio-economically from this new Taiwanese consciousness. On virtually every social indicator, the nearly 500,000 indigenous Taiwanese fare poorly relative to the national average. Unemployment rates among the Yuanzhumin are much higher than the national mean, educational attainment rates for indigenous people are much lower, per capita income is an estimated 40 percent of the national average, and according to one study, Yuanzhumin also face substantial discrimination in employment.²⁴ As a rule, indigenous people lack access to adequate health

²⁰ Kung Wen-chi, *Indigenous People and the Press: A Study of Taiwan* (Taipei: Hanlu Publishers, 2000). See also, Shelley Rigger, "The Policy of the Republic of China toward Taiwan's Mountain People" (Senior thesis, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, 1984), 84-123.

²¹ Kung, *Indigenous People and the Press: A Study of Taiwan*, 64; Kung Wen-chi [孔文吉]; Yuanzhumin Member (KMT) of the Legislative Yuan [立法院], personal interview with Joel Fetzer, May 5, 2008, Taipei; Lin Bainian, *Taiwan Yuanzhuminzu zhi quanli yu fazhi* [The rights and legal system of Taiwanese aborigines], 109; and Rigger, "What a Difference a Decade Makes: Impressions from 1983 and 1991."

²² Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China, "Members of the Legislative Yuan," <http://www.ly.gov.tw/ly/en/index.jsp> (accessed February 5, 2010).

²³ Caroline Hong, "Law Protecting Aboriginal Rights Is Praised," *Taipei Times*, January 22, 2005, 3. See also, Lin Shuya, *Diyi minzu: Taiwan yuanzhuminzu yundong de xianfa yiyi* [The first people: The constitutional implications of the Taiwanese aboriginal movement] (Taipei: Vanguard Publishing, 2000).

²⁴ Kung, *Indigenous People and the Press: A Study of Taiwan*; Kun-Hui Ku, "Ethnographic Studies of Voting among the Austronesian Paiwan—The Role of Paiwan Chiefs in the Contemporary

care, and their life expectancy is an average of ten years shorter than that of the general population.²⁵

The current political status of the Yuanzhumin is somewhat bifurcated. On the one hand, both the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the KMT have had some interest in promoting the rights of indigenous people. Because the DPP wants to forge a political identity and cultural history separate from that of the People's Republic of China, the Yuanzhumin provide a helpful counter-narrative to support the idea that Taiwan is, and always has been, separate from China.²⁶ As Melissa Brown notes, indigenous people can contribute to the argument that "Taiwanese are not Chinese."²⁷ The relationship between the KMT and Yuanzhumin historically has been built on a model of political patronage: a trading of electoral support for policies that supposedly have aided indigenous groups. In 2009, for example, President Ma (馬英九) promised to experiment with political autonomy, and he vowed to provide an additional 32,000 jobs for Yuanzhumin.²⁸

It is hard to avoid the conclusion, however, that the support from the two parties masks an underlying prejudice against aborigines. In 2004, for instance, DPP Vice President Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) commented that Yuanzhumin victims of floods and mudslides in the aftermath of a typhoon did not deserve to be rescued because they had recklessly cut down trees and tilled the land. She further suggested that Yuanzhumin were not the original inhabitants of the island and that they should relocate to Central and South America to allow the land to recover from the damage they supposedly had inflicted.²⁹ Even the KMT, which is perceived as a political ally of the Yuanzhumin, has not been without its problems with aboriginal voters. For decades, KMT governments have deposited nuclear waste on Orchid Island (蘭嶼), which is entirely populated by native tribes. In 2009, Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs announced three proposed repositories for nuclear waste. Two of these sites

State System of Taiwan," *Pacific Affairs* 81, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 383-406, and Chu Jou-juo, "From Incorporation to Exclusion: The Employment Experience of Taiwanese Urban Aborigines," *China Quarterly*, no. 164 (December 2000): 1025-1043.

²⁵ "Public Health Care Projects for Indigenous People," *China Post*, April 13, 2008, www.chinaPost.com.tw (accessed December 15, 2010).

²⁶ Stéphane Corcuff, "The Symbolic Dimension of Democratization and the Transition of National Identity under Lee Teng-hui," in *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, ed. Stéphane Corcuff (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 73-101. See also, Wang Fu-chang, *Dangdai Taiwan shehui de zuqun xiangxiang*, 112-119, and Kun-hui Ku, "Rights to Recognition: Minority/Indigenous Politics in the Emerging Taiwanese Nationalism," *Social Analysis* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 99-121.

²⁷ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities*, 21.

²⁸ "Government to Allow Indigenous Self-Rule on Trial Basis: Ma," *China Post*, August 29, 2009, www.chinaPost.com.tw (accessed December 15, 2010).

²⁹ "Han-Aborigine Problems Just a Storm in a Teacup," *China Post*, July 16, 2004, www.chinaPost.com.tw (accessed December 15, 2010).

are located near indigenous communities in the counties of Pingtung and Taitung.³⁰ Finally, in reality, it has been relatively easy for both parties to practice a policy of benign neglect toward a population of native people that is relatively small, politically marginalized, and economically disadvantaged, and as a result, there has been little sustained attention given to aboriginal political issues in Taiwanese politics. What remains to be seen is how the public views Yuanzhumin, and what factors explain popular support for or opposition to this group of people.

Theories to Be Tested

We know of no English- or Chinese-language, published, quantitative study of public attitudes toward indigenous people in Taiwan. An empirical literature on attitudes toward indigenous groups in other countries exists, especially in Australia.³¹ These studies consistently find that older respondents, people with little education, and men are more likely to have negative attitudes toward indigenous people. Only two published empirical studies of which we are aware have analyzed public attitudes toward aboriginal rights, and in both cases, they deal with public support for indigenous land claims in Australia. In its landmark 1992 “Mabo” decision, the High Court of Australia recognized a form of native title to the land if it had been occupied prior to European contact. The decision led to subsequent legislation that provided a means to determine native land claims and a structure of compensation for land that had been expropriated illegally. The court’s decision and the subsequent legislation have proved to be politically controversial.³² In analyzing public attitudes toward the Mabo decision and the broader issue of native land claims, Marks and McDonnell³³ find that education, place of residence, and partisanship were the best predictors of attitudes toward aboriginal rights. Respondents with more education and those who were members of the Labor

³⁰ Loa Lok-sin, “Group Sings No to Nuclear Waste,” *Taipei Times*, June 29, 2009, 2.

³¹ Anne Pedersen, Brian Griffiths, Natalie Contos, Brian Bishop, and Ian Walker, “Attitudes toward Aboriginal Australians in City and County Settings,” *Australian Psychologist* 35, no. 2 (2000): 109-117; Colleen Ward and Anne-Marie Masgoret, “Attitudes toward Immigrants, Immigration, and Multiculturalism in New Zealand: A Social Psychological Analysis,” *International Migration Review* 42, no. 1 (2008): 227-248; and Justine Dandy and Rogelia Pe-Pua, “Attitudes toward Multiculturalism, Immigration and Cultural Diversity: Comparison of Dominant and Non-dominant Groups in Three Australian States,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34, no. 1 (2010): 34-46.

³² Megan Davis, “Chained to the Past: The Psychological *Terra Nullius* of Australia’s Public Institutions,” in *Protecting Rights Without a Bill of Rights: Institutional Performance and Reform in Australia*, ed. Tom Campbell, Jeffrey Goldsworthy, and Adrienne Stone (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 175-195.

³³ Gary N. Marks and Paula McDonnell, “New Politics? The Mabo Debate and Public Opinion on Native Title in Australia,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 31-50.

Party, which supported the court's decision, were more likely to support native land claims. By contrast, people living in rural areas, which might have been more directly affected by aboriginal legal claims, were less supportive of the decision. In a 2008 empirical analysis of this question, van den Eynde and Dharmalingham³⁴ found that support for aboriginal rights in Australia was still tied to educational attainment and rural place of residence. In our article, we propose to test four theoretical approaches to explain support for aboriginal rights in Taiwan: education, ethnicity and partisanship, intergroup contact, and Confucian ideology.

Our previous research note in this journal³⁵ suggested that adherence to Confucian values did not consistently undermine public support for liberal democratic values, but the survey did not include any questions on support for Yuanzhumin. We therefore commissioned a poll in 2009 that would allow us to test the relationship between various socio-economic factors and support for Yuanzhumin. Using these data, we now are able to test a range of hypotheses about support for aboriginal rights specifically, and ethnic minorities more generally. In order to assess the impact of ideology, moreover, we also included three questions that would measure support for Confucian values.

Education

According to both American and cross-national empirical studies, education promotes increased political and social liberalism. Particularly relevant to this article is Weakliem's finding that "increased education boosts support for racial and ethnic minorities."³⁶ Although scholars agree that the effect occurs, they are divided on the exact mechanism. Some hold that university students are some of the first to be exposed to new, generally liberal, trends in social life and so are more likely to adopt changing values. Other investigators counter that the ability to think critically, which higher education supposedly promotes, leads one to reject ethnic stereotypes and hence to embrace liberal norms. A third school asserts that liberal, pro-multicultural instructors and

³⁴ Alison van den Eynde and Arunachalam Dharmalingham, "Public Opinion about Indigenous Australian Land Rights," *New Zealand Sociology* 23, no. 2 (2008): 90-102.

³⁵ Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, "The Effect of Confucian Values on Support for Democratization and Human Rights in Taiwan," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 1 (2007): 143-154.

³⁶ Duane Francis Alwin, Ronald Lee Cohen, and Theodore Mead Newcomb, *Political Attitudes over the Life Span: The Bennington Women after Fifty Years* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Kenneth A. Feldman and Theodore Mead Newcomb, *The Impact of College on Students* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994); David L. Weakliem, "The Effects of Education on Political Opinions: An International Study," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 13, no. 2 (June 2002):141-157; but also see Mary R. Jackman, "General and Applied Tolerance: Does Education Increase Commitment to Racial Integration?" *American Journal of Political Science*, 22, no. 2 (May 1978): 302-324.

curricula indoctrinate undergraduates with these views.³⁷ If we apply these perspectives to attitudes toward Yuanzhumin, the theory would predict that as education increased, so too would support for the rights of indigenous Taiwanese. At its core, a liberal perspective values the rights of racial and ethnic minorities, tolerates cultural outsiders, and values diversity of various kinds. The regression model will therefore include level of education as one of the independent variables.

Ethnic Group Conflict and Partisanship

The dominant political cleavage in post-World War II Taiwan has been between post-1949 “mainlander Chinese” and pre-1949-origin “native Taiwanese.” As the country has democratized, this division has manifested itself via a political system bifurcated between a “mainlander”-dominated KMT, or “pan-blue” coalition, and a “native Taiwanese”-controlled DPP, or “pan-green” movement. These ethnic and partisan divisions suggest that political values are ethnicity- and party-driven and that ethnicity-based political parties socialize voters to adopt the policy positions of the party with which they identify.³⁸ As we noted above, the Yuanzhumin by and large embraced the KMT takeover of Taiwan in the late 1940s. They perceived the Chinese “mainlander”-dominated KMT as far less hostile to their political interests than either the Japanese, who virtually imprisoned them on reservations, or the ethnically Fujianese or Hakka “native-Taiwanese” majority, which had taken advantage of them for centuries. The KMT rewarded this loyalty with some policy support over the years, and the Yuanzhumin remain overwhelmingly affiliated with the KMT.³⁹ In Taiwan, a partisanship theory would therefore predict that members of the disproportionately mainlander KMT would be much more likely to support the rights of the Yuanzhumin than would affiliates of the predominantly native-Taiwanese DPP. Even regardless of their ethnicity, pan-blue supporters should rationally support the interests of indigenous Taiwanese, who have six seats automatically set aside for them in the Legislative Yuan and are some of the most loyal KMT voters on the island.

An ethnic politics model, by contrast, suggests that ethnic minorities show political solidarity against the ethnic majority. In the Taiwanese context, mainlanders and indigenous Taiwanese should form an alliance against the

³⁷ Robert S. Erikson and Kent L. Tedin, *American Public Opinion*, 8th ed. (New York: Longman, 2011), 138-143.

³⁸ Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley, 1960).

³⁹ Rigger, “What a Difference a Decade Makes: Impressions from 1983 and 1991”; Michael S. Stainton, “*Houshan, Qianshan, Mugan*: Categories of Self and Other in a Tayal Village,” in *Lishi, wenhua yu zuqun: Taiwan yuanzhumin guoji yantaohui lunwenji* [History, culture and ethnicity: Selected papers from the International Research Conference on Taiwanese indigenous people], ed. Ye Chunrong (Taipei: Shunyi Taiwan yuanzhumin bowuguan [SMC Publishing], 2006), 393-426.

majority native Taiwanese. In a model of support for aboriginal rights, therefore, being a mainlander should boost commitment to Yuanzhumin. Majority native-Taiwanese respondents, on the other hand, should show less enthusiasm for the concerns of minority aborigines.

Intergroup Contact

Intergroup contact theory contends that the effect of interaction with members of a particular ethnic group depends partly on the nature of such contact. Ethnic prejudice should diminish “if—and only if—the contact situation embodie[s] four conditions: (1) equal status between the groups in the situation, (2) common goals, (3) no competition between groups, and (4) authority sanction for the contact.”⁴⁰ However, if members of two ethnicities relate only superficially, interaction will either increase hostility or have no effect.⁴¹ The ideal survey to test this theory would ask respondents how frequently they come into contact with a particular group and under what circumstances. One might then be able to use the responses to estimate an instrumental-variables, simultaneous-equations model of the direct effect of contact on the respondents’ attitudes. Unfortunately, no such individual-contact questions exist in either of these surveys of Taiwanese views of aborigines. Even if these polls had contained such items, finding a defensible, truly exogenous instrument for reported contact is rarely possible. In the absence of the ideal dataset and instrumental variable, we relied upon regional census data on the percentage of a region’s population that is Yuanzhumin (our relevant regressor). Because this measure probably correlates more strongly with superficial instead of close, personal contact, we hypothesize that this variable will either reduce respondents’ support for aboriginal rights or have no influence.

Confucian Ideology

Finally, we test the relationship between adherence to Confucian values and support for Yuanzhumin. This theory assumes that ideology shapes people’s political values. As the most important ideological system in Taiwan and, indeed, in much of East Asia, Confucianism has provided both a set of ideas about the proper functioning of society and a model of civic behavior for centuries. There are, however, contradictory ways in which Confucianism could influence public attitudes toward indigenous groups. On the one hand, one might expect that adherence to Confucian values, for both historical and

⁴⁰ Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, “Does Intergroup Contact Reduce Prejudice? Recent Meta-Analytic Findings,” in *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination*, ed. Stuart Oskamp (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000), 93-114.

⁴¹ Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Perseus Books, 1979), 261-281, and Thomas F. Pettigrew, “The Intergroup Contact Hypothesis Reconsidered,” in *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters: Social Psychology and Society*, ed. Miles Hewstone and Rupert Brown (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 169-195.

theoretical reasons, would decrease support for the rights of Yuanzhumin. The Han Chinese majority historically has been associated with and transmitted the Confucian tradition. If adherents of Confucianism implicitly associate the tradition with Han ethnicity, they are less likely to promote the distinct political claims of the non-Han Yuanzhumin. Moreover, Confucianism is implicitly paternalistic. The assumption is that Confucian values are superior and set the standard for state actions.

On its surface, a Confucian attitude would not seem to advocate distinct rights for groups such as the Yuanzhumin, who are not part of the Confucian mainstream. Yet, Confucianism is a rich and complex tradition that is open to multiple interpretations. Baogang He has argued persuasively that it can support the rights of ethnic minorities.⁴² Specifically, He contends that the Confucian emphasis on cultural unity and harmony leads to a “Confucian communitarianism,” in which the rights and values of minority groups are both respected and promoted. The majority might well promote the assimilation of minority groups to Confucian norms, but only in a context that values harmonious relations between the majority and the minority, even to the point of recognizing the validity of minority group claims. If this reading is right, it is possible that those who adhere to Confucian values might well be likely to support the rights of indigenous peoples.

What we seek to measure is a least-common-denominator Confucianism that is true to the tradition but does not predetermine our empirical results by either veering in a legalist, antidemocratic direction,⁴³ or by taking on a purely Mencius-based, prodemocratic slant.⁴⁴ We therefore define Confucianism as an ethical system that places primary emphasis on family loyalty, social hierarchies, and social harmony.⁴⁵

Data and Methods

In order to test these diverse hypotheses, we analyzed two public-opinion surveys. The first, the 2006 Taiwan Social Image Survey I (台灣地區社會意向調查), allowed us to test three of the four theories. Carried out and distributed by principal investigator Wen-Shan Yang (楊文山) and the Institute of

⁴² Baogang He, “Confucianism versus Liberalism over Minority Rights: A Critical Response to Will Kymlicka,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (March 2004): 103-123.

⁴³ Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization* (Stamford, CT: Thomson Learning, 1991), 37, and 47-49, and Han Fei Zi, *Han Fei Tzu-Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

⁴⁴ Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization*, 42, and Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D.C. Lau (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970).

⁴⁵ Jennifer Oldstone-Moore, *Understanding Confucianism* (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2003), and Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Sociology at Academia Sinica, this telephone poll surveyed 1,223 randomly selected interviewees age eighteen and over throughout Taiwan between May 18 and June 16, 2006.⁴⁶ Because this study contained no items directly measuring Confucian values, however, we privately commissioned our own public-opinion survey on Taiwanese aborigines. Conducted by TNS Research International during September 2-13, 2009, the telephone-based poll used random-digit dialing to select household telephone numbers and then quota-sampled individual respondents within the households by region, gender, and age according to the 2007 Taiwan Census of Population. This procedure produced one thousand usable respondents before weighting.

In addition to collecting information about basic demographics (city of residence, gender, age in categories, educational level from primary to graduate school, marital status, average household monthly income in categories from none to over NT\$150,001), the 2006 poll included religious identification. Our 2009 survey measured the three major Confucian values with questions on the extent to which the respondent placed his or her family’s wishes (家人的願望) above his or her own, followed the advice of elders (管長輩的意見), and would give in to a co-worker (接納我的同事) if the respondent thought him or her to be in the wrong (認為他是錯的). The dependent variable was support for aboriginal rights. In the 2006 poll, the question asked whether “Yuanzhumin” were “weak and helpless [弱者],” or “relatively neglected or overlooked

Table 1. Levels of Support for Confucian Values and Indigenous Rights

Confucian Values, 2009	
Question	Percent Agree
Follow family’s wishes always or usually (family loyalty)	33.0
Follow elders’ advice always or usually (social hierarchies)	19.0
Give in to co-worker always or usually (social harmony)	52.5
Indigenous Rights, 2006 and 2009	
Thinking about the following groups in our society, which ones are weak in society, or relatively neglected or overlooked... Yuanzhumin? (aboriginal respondents excluded)	51.0
Government should spend more money and time on aborigines (aboriginal respondents excluded)	38.3

⁴⁶ Neither the producers nor the distributors of these data are responsible for the analyses or interpretations in this article.

[比較被忽視]” in Taiwanese society. For the 2009 data, the relevant item was whether the government (1) “has already spent too much [已經花太多],” (2) “should spend more [應該花更多],” or (3) was spending “just the right amount [恰到好]” of money and time on aboriginal matters (原住民的事情).

The first circumstance that we explored was the extent to which Taiwan is still a largely Confucian society. Table 1 indicates the percentage of our respondents who agreed with each of the indicators of the three different Confucian values. These results demonstrate that, in 2009, respondents gave majority support to our indicator of social harmony but tended to disagree with the arguably Confucian values of expected family loyalty and, especially, with the importance of social hierarchies. So while we still seem justified in treating Taiwan as a society based on Confucian values, the level of popular acquiescence in such a worldview appears to be slipping as the island democratizes.⁴⁷ Table 1 also documents the overall level of support for aboriginal rights in the two surveys. Although the measures differ, 51 percent of respondents in 2006 viewed Yuanzhumin as “relatively neglected” in Taiwanese society, while 38 percent believed in 2009 that the government should “spend more money and time” on aborigines.

In order to test the net effect of the independent variables on the dichotomous (2006) or trichotomous (2009) indicators of support for aboriginal rights, we used bivariate or ordered Logit, respectively, to estimate our regression equations. Bendiren (本地人) Taiwanese represent the default category for the ethnicity regressors, but aboriginal respondents were excluded from the analysis. We coded respondents as “urban” if they lived in a city (市) or municipality (地區) instead of a county (縣). We also used these same subdivisions to match regions to the percentage of residents who are Yuanzhumin according to the 2000 Taiwan Census.⁴⁸

Findings

Table 2 presents the results of our regression analysis. We first tested how well the education theory matched our data. Indeed, increased education substantially boosted support for Yuanzhumin rights in both surveys ($b = .335$, $p < .05$ for 2006; $b = .175$, $p < .05$ for 2009). Overall, our data confirm scholars’ earlier theories that education increases support for liberal values, in this case, the particular norm of sympathy for an outsider group.

⁴⁷ Cf. parallel statistics from 1995 and 2001 in Fetzer and Soper, “The Effect of Confucian Values on Support for Democratization and Human Rights in Taiwan.”

⁴⁸ Percentages calculated from Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, R.O.C. (Taiwan), table 56, “Number of Indigenous Population by City/County in Taiwan-Fukien Area,” <http://eng.stat.gov.tw/public/Attachment/533017262371.doc> (accessed February 11, 2010), and table 1, “Number of Households, Population and Average Size of the Household by City/County in Taiwan-Fukien Area,” <http://eng.stat.gov.tw/public/Attachment/533016515771.doc> (accessed February 11, 2010).

Table 2. Regression Model of Determinants of Public Support for Indigenous Rights

Independent Variables	2006 Survey without Interaction B (SE)	2006 Survey with Interaction B (SE)	2009 Survey B (SE)
Family Loyalty			-.071 (.075)
Social Hierarchies			.061 (.076)
Social Harmony			.183** (.080)
Christian	.017 (.310)	.052 (.310)	
Nonreligious	-.189 (.157)	-.190 (.157)	
Income	.011 (.022)	.010 (.022)	-.024 (.018)
Education	.335** (.066)	.339** (.066)	.175** (.086)
Woman	-.221* (.134)	-.214 (.134)	-.154 (.141)
Age	.000 (.007)	.000 (.007)	-.002 (.008)
Mainlander	.333* (.199)	.829** (.341)	.098 (.215)
Other Ethnicity			-.391 (.390)
Pan-Blue	.240* (.139)	.337** (.149)	
Mainlander & Pan-Blue		-.757* (.413)	
Urban	.063 (.151)	.050 (.152)	.026 (.153)
Single	-.112 (.191)	-.116 (.191)	.167 (.195)
Percent Yuanzhumin	.006 (.019)	.004 (.019)	-.043** (.019)
Constant/Constant 1	-1.591** (.474)	-1.640** (.476)	-.360 (.655)
Constant 2			1.372** (.657)
Nagelkerke R ²	.076	.081	.037
χ^2	57.418**	60.856**	25.298**
Degrees of freedom	11	12	12
N	975	975	751

Note: Data in the first and second columns are from the 2006 Taiwan Social Image Survey I and are unweighted; those in the third column are from the 2009 TNS Taiwanese Aborigines Study and are weighted by gender, age, and region. Equation estimated with dichotomous (first and second columns) or ordered Logit (third column). All regressors are dummy variables, except for Family Loyalty (1 to 5), Social Hierarchies (1 to 5), Social Harmony (1 to 5), Income (1 to 14 for first and second columns and 2 to 16 for third column), Education (1 to 7 for first and second columns and to 5 for third column), Age (19 to 85 for first and second columns and 15 to 64 for third column), and Percent Yuanzhumin (0.17 to 29.54). * $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$.

In contrast, the regression analysis shows only partial support for a Confucian version of ideological theory. Two of the three Confucian values (i.e., family loyalty and social hierarchies) had no statistically significant effect on attitudes toward Yuanzhumin in 2009. The third key Confucian value (social harmony), in contrast, seems to have increased support for aboriginal rights ($b = .183, p < .05$), a result suggesting that Confucianism need not undermine minorities' appeals for just treatment.⁴⁹ The 2006 survey contained no direct measures of support for Confucian values, but it did include a question on religious identification. For the 2006 data, we assumed that those "with no religious affiliation" and those who self-identified as Protestant or Catholic Christians were less Confucian than those who were adherents of one of the major East Asian religions (Taoism, Buddhism, or folk religion). Neither the variable for being Christian nor that for subscribing to no religion, however, achieved statistical significance.

Partisanship, by itself, appears to affect attitudes toward indigenous Taiwanese. In the 2006 survey, self-identified pan-blue respondents were disproportionately likely to support aboriginal rights, at least at the relatively forgiving .10 level ($b = .240, p = .084$). Although the 2009 poll lacked a direct partisanship question, we created a pan-blue proxy by restricting the sample to those two groups that are most likely to differ in party loyalty: affluent (monthly household income over NT\$60,000) mainlanders and poor-to-lower middle class (monthly household income less than or equal to NT\$60,000) native/bendiren Taiwanese.⁵⁰ At least with the resulting N of 395 respondents, however, a dummy variable for the KMT proxy (i.e., affluent mainlanders) in our privately commissioned survey was not at all statistically significant ($b = .060, p = .848$). These different results for partisanship in the 2006 versus the 2009 survey probably resulted from the more precise measurement of partisanship in 2006.

The measure for ethnicity also shows similarly split results for the two surveys. Mainlanders, who should support aboriginal rights according to an ethnic-mobilization theory, generally behaved as predicted in 2006 ($b = .333, p < .10$), but not in 2009 ($.098, p > .10$). Because we hypothesized that the effect of being a mainlander might have different effects based on one's partisanship, we also estimated a regression containing an interaction term between ethnicity and partisanship for the 2006 data (see table 2, column 2). Overall, the results confirm our suspicion; both the variables for pan-blue and mainlander became stronger and even more statistically significant

⁴⁹ Although not relevant for the four major theories, none of the control variables (i.e., income, gender, urbanicity, and marital status) reached statistical significance.

⁵⁰ Hans Stockton, "Partisanship, Ethnic Identification, and Citizen Attitudes toward Regime and Government on Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (November 2006): 705-721; Wong Tze-Wai, "Class Voting in Hong Kong and Taiwan: A Comparative Analysis" (M.Phil. thesis, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, 2008).

($b = .337, p < .05$; $b = .829, p < .05$, respectively). The interaction term between mainlander and pan-blue interviewees was likewise statistically significant ($b = -.757, p = .067$), at least at the .10 level. Substantively, these results indicate that being a post-1949-origin waishengren is more important for pan-green respondents. Being a mainlander makes pan-green affiliates .829 units more proaboriginal; having a mainlander identity makes pan-blues, by contrast, only .409 units more favorable to indigenous Taiwanese. Perhaps mainlanders in the pan-green coalition recognize that they are themselves an ethnic minority in this political grouping and so are disproportionately likely to sympathize with the rights of an even smaller ethnic minority in Taiwan: aborigines.

Contact theory finds some support in our data, however. In table 2, the coefficient for the percentage of Yuanzhumin in a locality is negative and significant ($b = -.043, p < .05$), indicating that as the proportion of aborigines in a region increases, so too does hostility to government action on their behalf. In contrast, the contact variable for the 2006 survey in this same table has no discernable influence on whether respondents were likely to view Yuanzhumin as socially disadvantaged.⁵¹

Conclusion

Our analysis of Taiwanese attitudes toward indigenous peoples could, of course, be more extensive and definitive and test more independent variables if more relevant surveys existed. Given the relative dearth of appropriate data, however, our findings tentatively confirm some of the existing literature on public attitudes toward aborigines, disconfirm other theories, and suggest some intriguing possibilities about the relationship between Confucianism and the rights of minorities. As we noted above, the data strongly confirm those theories that posit a link between education and liberal political values. If we assume that the rates of educational attainment in Taiwan will continue to rise in the decades ahead, it is possible that political support for Yuanzhumin will increase as well.

Our findings only partially match those of Marks and McDonnell,⁵² however, who found that partisanship was a strong predictor of public attitudes toward the Mabo in Australia. Interviewees in the 2006 survey who self-identified as members of the pan-blue coalition were more likely to support

⁵¹ In response to a reviewer's comment, we also replicated the analysis in columns 1 and 3 of table 2, using multilevel models (i.e., a varying-intercept random-effects dichotomous logistic regression, with a group-level predictor of regional census data for the 2006 survey and a varying-intercept random-effects linear GLS regression with a group-level predictor of regional census data for the 2009 poll; a model with a dichotomized version of the 2009 dependent variable failed to converge in STATA's xtlogit routine, probably because the number of groups, twenty-two, was too small). The results did not differ substantively from those in table 2.

⁵² Marks and McDonnell, "New Politics? The Mabo Debate and Public Opinion on Native Title in Australia."

the rights of native groups, but no such relationship existed in our 2009 data. A possible reason for this divergent result is that aboriginal rights have been much more politicized in Australia than in Taiwan. Minority rights have been controversial in Australia, and the major parties have taken opposing and very public positions on Mabo land claims. In that environment, partisanship is more likely to affect public attitudes. In Taiwan, by contrast, Yuanzhumin rights have never been as politicized or conflict-ridden, and party divisions have presumably meant less in socializing partisans in their attitudes toward aborigines. As various ethnic-politics theories predict, a numerically small group that is unable to politicize its interests is likely to become politically marginalized and/or irrelevant, as has been the case for aborigines in Taiwan. Our results also confirm our 2007 findings that adherence to Confucian values does not consistently undermine support for democracy and human rights.⁵³ While that study discovered that faithfulness to particular Confucian values was correlated with opposition to women's rights, it also found that adherence to other Confucian values was positively associated with support for democratization. This article takes that investigation a step further by demonstrating that Confucianism does not necessarily undermine protection for the rights of ethnic minorities, another key value of liberal democracy. Two of the three Confucian values (family loyalty and social hierarchies) have no effect on attitudes toward aboriginal rights, while the remaining value of social harmony increases support for Yuanzhumin. The empirical results of this article also confirm the theoretical work of Baogang He and others who have argued for the compatibility of Confucianism with minority rights and other values of liberal democracy.⁵⁴ This result is surprising and has important ramifications for the rights of Yuanzhumin and for liberal democracy more generally.

Confucianism is often perceived as promoting the superiority of Han Chinese. Key passages from Confucian texts endorse that idea, and the repeated attempts by Han Chinese to wipe out Yuanzhumin culture and to promote Confucian values have reinforced this message. Given such a history, one would expect that Confucianism would be absolutely incompatible with the political and cultural rights of native peoples. That Confucian values do not undermine support for indigenous peoples in Taiwan, however, suggests that the tradition is malleable and can be interpreted in a way that advances the rights of Yuanzhumin. In one historical context, the Confucian value of social harmony, for example, was interpreted to mean that those who were not Han needed to assimilate to Confucian values in order to be fully included

⁵³ Fetzer and Soper, "The Effect of Confucian Values on Support for Democratization and Human Rights in Taiwan."

⁵⁴ Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), and Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

within the political community. In a different environment, however, social harmony is understood to require a respect for the rights and practices of different cultural groups. This particular Confucian value seems to have been transformed by democratization. In the final analysis, what a tradition actually “means” is mediated through political and cultural practices that both shape, and are shaped by, the tradition. Confucianism does not inherently support or oppose the rights of Yuanzhumin; rather, the concrete meaning of this ideology depends entirely on who is interpreting and applying the tradition.

The results of our study potentially have ramifications for mainland China, Japan, and Vietnam. Like Taiwan, these countries are Confucian and have a sizeable population of indigenous peoples. Given those similarities, it is possible that attitudes toward native groups will develop and change in those societies as the Confucian tradition is reinterpreted to be more generous and welcoming to ethnic outsiders. No doubt, Taiwan’s economic and political liberalization and its increased rate of educational attainment have encouraged this process. Similar trends in those other East Asian countries might also lead to more enlightened attitudes and policies toward native groups.

It is also possible, however, that the Taiwanese case is so unique that it is virtually impossible to generalize about the country beyond its shores. The proverbial elephant in the room of Taiwanese politics, of course, is the question of the island’s relationship to China. In this political environment, virtually every other issue that might divide party loyalists diminishes in significance. The uniqueness of the Taiwanese political environment also means that the narrative about aboriginal rights will vary in how it plays itself out in other countries with indigenous populations. Some Taiwanese are making a concerted effort to identify or create a story of cultural and historical distinctiveness for the island. In this regard, the Yuanzhumin are quite helpful precisely because they are not Han Chinese, they never have been a part of China (at least during recorded history), they have been living on Taiwan for thousands of years, and they have distinctive cultural practices that can be identified and promoted. It is, of course, somewhat ironic that the Yuanzhumin, who for centuries faced intense pressures to assimilate to Han values, would, at least in some circles, be encouraged by Han Chinese to promote their ethnic, cultural, and historical distinctiveness. Such a narrative, however, is not likely to take hold in China or in Japan or Vietnam, where no political capital is to be made from the suggestion that an indigenous group somehow has greater political legitimacy than the ethnic majority.