Tribal Councils as a Decision-Making Mechanism for Post-disaster Reconstructions: A Case Study of Ulaljuc

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Abstract
Since the 1990s, indigenous people in Taiwan have engaged in tribal councils for the purpose of integrating the tribal authority and the modern administrative system. The establishment of tribal councils provides a communicative forum for tribal leaders, village, and the association of community development to make decisions of common tribal affairs. When disasters happen, the internal tribal response strategies and external assistance mechanisms might cooperate through either traditional or modern administrative systems. The research focused on how these organizations, while in interim housing, influenced the reconstruction and rehabilitation after disasters. The research’s findings suggested that tribal councils, a pre-existing mechanism, seemed to be an appropriate forum for negotiation and decision-making for tribal affairs.

Keywords
Interim housing, tribal council, post-disaster reconstruction

Typhoon Marakot wrought catastrophic damage in Taiwan on August 8, 2009. The slow moving storm dumped record rainfall as it crossed southern Taiwan, especially in Tainan, Kaohsiung, Pingtung, Taitung, and indigenous communities. The torrential rains it brought caused serious flooding, triggered enormous landslides, and several villages were washed away in the mountain area by mudslides. This disaster had been referred as the 88 Flood. It destroyed nearly 1,700 homes, and 160,000 more were reported to have sustained damage. Estimates are that at least 600 people are believed dead and thousands more have been affected (Ministry of the Interior 2009).

The Typhoon Morakot tore through the village of Taiwu, in Pingtung County, destroying nearly everything. This village was located in an environmentally fragile region. After the typhoon, there was no way to rebuild on its previous site. All the residents in Taiwu Village were confirmed to have been moved to safety. The impoverished villagers were temporarily relocated in Jongchan Base at Pingtung and the rest of villagers were scattered. Two years later, permanent housing was completed at Xinchi Farm. Most qualified villagers moved into this new place and the traditional name of Ulaljuc was reclaimed.

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This research found that there were different reactions to public affairs between villagers from Laiyi and Taiwu Townships while in the Jongchan Base (Chen and Huang 2012). Moreover, the quality of life for villagers from Taiwu Township was lower in many respects than Laiyi Township while on the Base (Hunag et al. 2011). The researchers noticed that the struggle between traditional and modern leadership might emerge after moving to permanent houses (Chen and Huang 2012). This research was inspired by the findings from those previous researchers; therefore, it focused on the lack of interaction of Taiwu villagers with public affairs during the interim housing period and the power dynamics within Taiwu Village after resettlement in permanent housing.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF TAIWU TOWNSHIP**

Taiwu Township in Pingtung County is comprised of Taiwu Village, Jiaping Village, Jiasing Village, Wan-an Village, Pinghe Village, and Wutan Village. Those villagers are people of the Paiwan tribe. Most villages had migrated to the foot of the mountains before 2009, except Taiwu Village.

Taiwu Village was one of the major clans of Paiwan people whose influence went as far as Taitung County in its heyday, however, the power decreased to only its own village over time. The old village of Taiwu was located on the right band of upper Ulaluce Stream and the hinterland of a spur (paljakcauk) of northern Dawu Mountain (paraishideian). The village was situated about 1,050 meters above sea level in northern Dawu Mountain to the east, Doupulokoupori Mountain to the north, and Doutsaloumouy Mountain to the south. Due to inconvenient communications, the village was relocated to an altitude of 752 meters with the government’s assistance in the 1960s (Liu 2010).

In the past, traditional major crops of the Paiwan were millet, taro, sweet potato, and quinoa. The economic crops included cassava, soy, peanut, and nagaimo. When the socio-economic type switched from agriculture to business, many villagers no longer stayed in the village and migrated to city for better livelihood. In recent years, the tribe has promoted the coffee industry by organizing the Production and Marketing Teams of Coffee starting in 2006. As a result, the total cropland for coffee is about 24 hectares and the output of coffee beans is about 5,000 kilograms per year (Pingtung County Taiwu Township Office 2012).

Paiwan society is divided into classes of chiefs, nobles, and tribe people. Chiefs hold the most power, including land ownership, management rights to animals and plants, and the leadership of tribal people. Nobles are in responsible for command, negotiation, and helping minority groups (Hsieh 2007).

**TRIBAL COUNCIL: A CORNERSTONE OF INDIGENOUS AUTONOMY**

During the presidential election period in Taiwan in 1999, the representatives of indigenous tribes and the presidential candidate Chen Shui-bian signed a document *A New Partnership Between the Indigenous People and the Government of Taiwan* on Orchid Island. This treaty-like document declared the support of indigenous autonomy and the recovery of traditional territory for indigenous tribes. When Chen Shui-bian won the 2000 presidential election, he reaffirmed the New Partnership Agreement between indigenous tribes and the Government of Taiwan. This agreement reassured the respect of autonomic entities of indigenous tribes.

The notion of nation did not exist in the indigenous traditions in the 12 tribes of Taiwan. The lack of official systems in tribes made the quasi nation-to-nation relations regress to tribe-to-nation relations. In order to promote tribes’ autonomous development, the establishment of tribal councils in every tribe is necessary with each tribal council nominating a representative to form a combined...
council for the 12 tribes. Those representatives from each tribe can negotiate with the Government of Taiwan more equally and efficiently (Chang 2005).

The Council of Indigenous People, Executive Yuan promoted the Implementation Directions of Tribal Council since March 10, 2006. Later, the amended Implementation Directions of Tribal Council was issued on January 21, 2011. Article 1 of the Directions stated that Executive Yuan formulates this implementation directions is to assist indigenous tribes in establishing an autonomous mechanism for the Council of Indigenous People. In addition, Article 2 noted that according to the Basic Law of Indigenous People, Regulations for Joint Management of Indigenous Area Resources, or other regulations, the tribes are allowed to execute rights of consent, participation, joint management, and benefit-sharing. It is permitted to treat public affairs with the resolutions of tribal councils, unless other laws or regulations refer to specific decision-making processes. It is clear that the Implementation Directions of Tribal Council stated the timing and decidable range of tribal councils.

Compared to the tribal councils of indigenous tribes in the United States, such as Choctaws or Yakima Nation (O’Brien 1989), it is notable that the indigenous tribes in Taiwan are allowed to have rights of consent, participation, and distribution in documents. In the process of implementation, however, the power struggle between government and indigenous traditions is inevitable. Generally, resolutions of tribal councils are encouraged in dealing with public affairs. This mechanism promotes the establishment of the tribal council of single tribe.

Since 2006, the notion of tribal councils was promoted; however, it caused administrative incompatibilities in many tribes, where “The Four Guardians” had held leaderships of tribes for a long while. “The Four Guardians” is an expression which indicates the four leaders of indigenous tribes, including a village officer, a village chief, a religious leader, and a chairperson of the community development association. It has been difficult to promote policies under the leadership of “The Four Guardians”. The chairperson of tribal council, the fifth leader of tribes, supposedly would make policies even harder to work out (Wu 2007). In addition, the legality might be an issue when conflicts happen between the resolutions of tribal councils and the existing government’s policies (Tien 2011).

In brief, the notion of tribal councils represents the idea of equality between indigenous people and the national system. It needs a lot of work to implement from individual tribes to alliance among tribes. However, this research found an example of tribal council which complied with the Implementation Directions of Tribal Council, integrated various leadership of the tribe, and helped its people go through the difficult process from disaster to completion of resettlement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is going to discuss two issues:
(1) What makes villagers of Taiwu village not participate in public affairs compared to Laiyi?
(2) How community organizations and their dynamics during the period of interim housing influenced the living of permanent housing?

Interviews and participative observation were employed. The researchers designed a semi-structured questionnaire of open questions about interviewees’ living experience from interim housing to permanent housing. Furthermore, interviewees’ opinions to the functioning and decision-making mechanism of the inhabitants’ organizations were collected. The researchers also participated and observed meetings of the tribal council after resettlement in the permanent housing. The dynamics among organizations and power structures was well-noted in the minutes. Moreover, the internal discussion among the researchers was helpful to verify and comprehend the
Table 1. Background of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Status of Resettlement</th>
<th>Participation status of Resettlement Committee</th>
<th>Moved into permanent housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Tribal chief</td>
<td>R1 Home</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Jongchan Base</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secretary, Ulaljuc Community Development Association</td>
<td>R6 Home</td>
<td>Public officials</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Villager</td>
<td>R3 Home</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Jongchan Base</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Villager</td>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>Woodcarving artisan</td>
<td>Jongchan Base</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Villager</td>
<td>R5 Home</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Jongchan Base</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chief of village</td>
<td>R6 Home</td>
<td>Chief of village</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chairperson, Ulaljuc Tribal Council</td>
<td>Taixiao Cafe</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collected from interviews, minutes, and observational records. Ultimately, the role of tribal council, especially when major events happened, was concluded in this research.

CHOICE OF INTERVIEWEES

In order to obtain the opinions from stakeholders, the interviews of this research focused on people who lived in Ulaljuc and experienced both the Typhoon Morakot and the tribal council. Some inhabitants who were not the power core were also interviewed for collecting the opinion of ordinary inhabitants. The background of interviewees is listed in Table 1.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Satisfaction With Living Experience in Interim Housing

The living environment of interim housing was not comfortable with problems of sound-proofing and heat insulation. The interviewees, however, showed positive sentiment to living in the interim housing and the service of public sectors or private service teams. Additionally, they were also aware of their own responsibilities to self-care and autonomy.

When we move in, painting, furniture, and everything was ready there for us. They also provides us television, refrigerator, stove, a set of table and chairs to use. Living there felt not bad at all. However, the sound-proofing between each room was not that good. We felt no problem to stay there and kids lived well too. (R5)

The managers were from the Red Cross. I deeply appreciated those who I called cute guys and ladies. No matter something happened to us, we would ask them for help. Once, my pipe was blocked. I went for them and asked them to pay for it even it was my fault. Can you believe it? (R4)

Tribal Council as a Decision-Making Mechanism

Inhabitants in Jongchan base were from five villages, including 254 people of 44 households from Taiwu Village, Taiwu Township, and 268 people of 67 households from Laiyi and three other villages. In the inhabitant meeting, people from Taiwu and Laiyi performed differently in terms of being proactive in public affairs of interim housing. Interviewees of Taiwu all felt that nothing required much concern on
the interim housing but that resettlement and living in the permanent housing was most important. They did not appreciate the other people’s proactive reaction to public affairs.

No comment… what can I do? I just move here (permanent housing) as fast as I could. (R3)

Because there is only a tribe in the Taiwu Village, each tribe has its own way (to handle public affairs). (R4)

The fact emerged, after the interview, that the management committee or inhabitant meeting of interim housing were not one of the major decision-making mechanism for inhabitants from Taiwu. The interviewees mentioned and only cared about resolutions or discussion made in meetings of the tribal council.

This research found not many articles which were positive of the implementation of the tribal council although the Ulaljuc tribal council had existed since 2007. In the Ulaljuc tribal council, one chairperson would be nominated and the election would be held every four years. Every household would be informed by mail when major events needed to be decided. The village chief and the chairperson of the community development association would sit shoulder to shoulder on the stage except the chairperson of Ulaljuc tribal council. The tribes’ people might participate to discuss tribal affairs by choice.

The Ulaljuc tribal council can be regarded as a decision-making mechanism above the existing organizations such as village office, community development association, etc. Village officers are in charge of the administration of meetings such as notices, minutes, etc. Villagers’ participation is fairly active.

Not many people participates in meetings of the tribal council. Sometimes half or more than half of the people showing up, sometimes more than one hundred participants. Most of time the meetings were held in the activity center. (R3)

The tenure of the chairperson is four years. The chairperson is replaced at every election. Some people agreed to the tenure of four and it was done. The tribal council has only one chairperson without staff. (R7)

The Role of Ulaljuc Tribal Council After Typhoon Morakot

Decision of relocation. After Typhoon Morakot on August 8, 2009, the tribal council of Taiwu Village had been regarded as an official authority to decide the major events when other villages were still debating about resettlement. On August 20, the second meeting of tribal council was held. Two things were decided in that resolution. First, the whole village moved out regarding the seriousness of subsidence and the local police station was asked to execute the mandatory evacuation if needed. Second, the tribal council passed the resettlement resolution and created the organization of resettlement committee unanimously. Meanwhile, members of resettlement committee were elected, as shown in Table 2. On August 27, the Legislative Yuan passed the Special Statute for Reconstruction for Post-Typhoon Morakot Disaster which gave the legislative basis to the resettlement.

You need to have the endorsement of tribal council to establish the resettlement committee. Therefore, most of people agreed with resettlement, and the committee members were elected then. (R2)

Arrangement of interim houses. 70 households of temporary shelter were needed after Typhoon Morakot, however, the Jongchan Base could offer only 44 households. This number was far from enough although some of people had been housed in other places. The tribal council, therefore, made a decision that the homeless and low incomes were the priority for interim houses; the rest would be decided by drawing lots. These people were the first group of inhabitants in the interim housing. People lost in drawing lots had the priority to move into houses renounced by the first group. The people in the first group might also join the drawing lots for the rest
Table 2. Resettlement Committee of Taiwu Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Nominee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Hua Chia-Chih, Hua Chen, Village Chief Sun Wan-Chiao, Legislator Chien Tung-Min, Legislator Kao Chin Su-Mei, and Representative Pan Ming-Li</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Yen He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Chih Wa-De, Lei Cheng-Hui, Juan Hui-Chen, Hua An-Yi, Ting Kuo-Ping, Chuang Tao-Chi, Huang Jung-Erh, Chiang Chiu-Mei, and Wei Jung-Kuei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: According to the minutes of tribal council of Taiwu Village on August 20, 2009.

At that time, people own the houses were eliminated (from interim housing), and there were 70 households waiting for interim housing. In some special cases, tribal council considered the reasonability of the arrangement and made the decision that people without relatives had the priority to move-in. The rest of quota was decided by drawing lots. Therefore, around 30 households were eliminated. The relationship among people was changed at that time. If the first group didn’t move in… same as… then the second group could take their places. Later, around 30 households moved in available houses. The rest of houses were arranged with drawing lots for the first group. The replacement was done unconditionally. The tribal council decided the whole thing. (R2)

Living in the Jongchan Base is about one year and eight months. The first year we followed the tribal council’s decision; and the second year we won in the drawing lots. (R3)

Distribution of donations. After Typhoon Morakot, the donations came to the disaster areas from many places. To distribute donations fairly is another responsibility of the tribal council. Considering the Jongchan base as a collective place for victims, a lot of donations were sent there and were taken by inhabitants of the first group. In the meeting of tribal council in 2009, the regulation of donations distribution was discussed and it was decided that the donations should be given to whoever needed them equally.

Although the donations are huge, the money and resources from charity groups are all in the interim housing. Those who don’t live in the interim housing didn’t get any. Then they assigned the village chief to receive the donations for them. In the end, the tribal council changed the situation so every household can get the donations. (R2)

Arrangement of permanent houses. Two years after Typhoon Morakot, the Xinchi Farm was completed. The tribal council performed a crucial function for the arrangement of permanent houses. In the second meeting of 2011, the tribal council unanimously passed the reclamation of the traditional name, Ulaljuc, which was used as the name of new community. Meanwhile, a resolution was announced: Juan Hui-Chen, Lei Cheng-Hui, and Yen He proposed that the Tribal Chief and members should have the priority for permanent houses regarding their great contribution to the tribe. 48 vote for approval and 2 vote for disapproval. The drawing lots for 117 permanent houses was completed satisfactorily.

According to the minutes, the Tribe Chief and leaders of various power structures decided their permanent houses without drawing a lot. The rest of tribes’ people did the drawing lots. This process demonstrated the dynamics of traditional and modern power structures in terms of the arrangement of permanent houses.

Tribe Chief living at the center was decided by the people, the village; the rest was decided by drawing lots. The space in front of houses is convenient for setting up a swing, dancing, and the festivals... Yes, yes, yes, people discussed in the tribal council and decided to live here. (R1)

The Representative, Chairperson, Village Chief, and Tribe Chief chose their houses first, and we did ours by drawing lots. (R5)
Yes, people did draw lots. Otherwise, people would prefer the locus close to streets for business. After the completion of houses, people would start this and that… The government of county allowed us to decide. Either drawing lots or people make their own choice. We decided to do the drawing lots for fairness. (R3)

The Role of Ulaljuc Tribal Council in Permanent Housing

After moving into the permanent houses, the insufficient space and the linked houses made the Karaoke as a problem. Because the speakers were left outsides, the excess singing affected neighbors who needed tranquility and disturbed the classes at the Primary School of Taiwu. Some inhabitants called for police to handle the noise problem. In the fifth meeting of tribal council on October 24, 2011, it was decided that singing could be done after school till 10 pm.

In the daytime, it can’t be turned on. There are classes at school. We have the rule. They can sing till 10 pm. After 10, it should be turned off. This was declared in the tribal council. (R7)

There is a time limit for Karaoke. From 5 pm to 9 pm. It is decided in the tribal council. A fine may occur if violated. The police will do the fine. They seem worried that it might affect students’ learning. The Principal Wu reminded in the meeting. The Village Chief was mad. So that’s the decision. (R3)

CONCLUSIONS

This research originated from the non-participation in public affairs of people from Ulaljuc (Taiwu Village, Taiwu Township), compared to people from Laiyi Township. After the interview and data collection from minutes of the tribal council, it was found that the tribal council had been used as the mechanism of decision-making for major events since 2007. The management committee of interim housing and the inhabitant meeting were for trivial matters.

In the process of reconstruction after Typhoon Morakot, Ulaljuc employed the tribal council as the communicative forum which allowed various organizations discussion in the same room. The resettlement of moving into the interim housing and permanent housing and the public affairs after moving were all discussed and decided in the tribal council.

Funding

The study was supported by National Council of Science, Taiwan, NSC100-2218-E-006-014.

Notes

1. The seven articles in the A New Partnership Between the Indigenous People and the Government of Taiwan includes: (1) to recognize the natural sovereignty of Taiwan’s indigenous people; (2) to promote indigenous autonomy; (3) to sign land treaties with Taiwan’s indigenous people; (4) to restore traditional names of villages, mountains and rivers; (5) to restore traditional territory; (6) to restore traditional use of natural resources, and promote ethnic self-development; and (7) to replace indigenous legislators with tribal delegates.

2. “The council members, whose seats are apportioned by population among the seven communities, are responsible for regulating tribal property, managing tribal funds, employing legal counsel, establishing and enforcing tribal ordinances, levying taxes, developing economic policies, establish an executive department, and promoting and protecting the health, peace, moral, education and general welfare of the tribe. Each council member reports regularly to his or her local community organization” (O’Brien 1989).

3. In 1947, a rule change was provided for election by the General Council of half of the Tribal Council members every two years for four-year terms. The tribal council’s primary responsibilities are to protect tribal property, promote social welfare, and safeguard the Yakima nation’s treaty rights.

4. Meeting was held three times in 2007, four times in 2008, twice in 2009, six times in 2010, seven times in 2011, and three times in 2012 until present.

5. Red Cross built 117 houses, including 92.6 and 105.8 square meters, in Xinchi Farm. The roof used traditional indigenous pattern and style. Three different styles of ample garden consisted of parking space, front yard, and back yard. The multi-functional activity center and production and marketing center of coffee are built up in the public space.

6. Members are the members of resettlement committee. Juan Hui-Chen is the current Representative of Taiwu Township, Lei Cheng-Hui is the current Chairperson of Taiwu
Township Council, Yen He is the current Chairperson of Ulaulju Community Development Association, Hua An-Yi is the current Chairperson of tribal council, and Ting Kuo-Ping is the current Village Chief.

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