

# TAIWAN

## **Indigenous Taiwanese**

Activity: 1988-2020

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- After the Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan, it dominated the island's administration and sequestered property belonging to the indigenous population. Since the 1980s, the aboriginal Taiwanese have agitated for more autonomy. In particular, in 1988 the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (formed in 1984) started a land rights campaign, hence the start date.
- In 1993 there were protests for autonomy. In 1995 they proposed a constitutional amendment that would have allowed indigenous self-rule and would have granted full land rights to Aboriginal groups, but it was rejected.
- The indigenous peoples are also seeking greater political and economic autonomy including control over education and the formation of a cabinet-level agency responsible for Aboriginal affairs (Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines; Keesing's; Lexis Nexis; Minahan 1996: 548ff; MAR).
- MAR codes non-zero protest scores up until 2006. In 2017, a protest by indigenous Taiwanese broke out with the aim of asking for more official recognition of land as traditional territories (Hioe 2017). The movement is thus coded as ongoing. [start date: 1988; end date: ongoing]

### **Dominant claim**

- Autonomy according to Scott (2008) and Minorities at Risk Project. [1988-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independence claims**

NA

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- While the group's political demands are clear, we were unable to find a specific definition for the territory it claims. We therefore flag this territorial claim as ambiguous and code it based on the group's ethnic settlement area as indicated by the GeoEPR dataset, which offers the closest approximation in this case.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- The ancestors of the indigenous Taiwanese have lived in Taiwan for centuries, long before the influence of the ethnic Han Chinese in the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century. Under Japanese occupation (1895-1945) the indigenous Taiwanese were segregated and severely repressed. In the 1930s the Japanese began assimilation policies. After the Kuomintang take-over in 1945, tribal land was nationalized. The KMT also continued the Japanese's assimilationist policies (Minorities at Risk Project). Hence, we code a prior restriction due to the KMT take-over in 1945. Repression of Taiwan's indigenous groups continued. Legislation in 1986, ostensibly to protect Aboriginal lands, led to further nationalization of tribal land (Minority Rights Group International). [1986: autonomy restriction]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- In 1994 the constitution was changed and the indigenous peoples recognized as 'original inhabitants' instead of 'mountain compatriots'. Aborigines were again allowed to use their indigenous names on identity cards (Minority Rights Group International). [1994: cultural rights concession]
- The situation of Taiwan's indigenous peoples has been improving in recent years. In 2001, teaching in aboriginal languages was instituted in Taiwan (Minorities at Risk Project; Minority Rights Group International). [2001: cultural rights concession]
- Cunningham (2011) codes a language concession in 2003: "Recognition of all Aboriginal tongues as official languages. This was essentially an education policy which is a battleground between Chinese and Taiwanese identity advocates." This could not be confirmed. Could not be confirmed. The article she cites (Teo 2003) speaks of a planned law that would make 14 languages co-official, including 11 aboriginal ones. It does not say that the law was adopted or that the government committed to such a law in negotiations with indigenous groups. Minority Rights Group International states that "Despite Mandarin being the first language (mother tongue) of slightly more than 20 per cent, and therefore a 'minority language', it is the main and almost exclusive language used by public authorities." MRGI does not make mention of the 2003 act. The evidence we found suggests that Mandarin continues to be the only official language.
- Moreover, there were several affirmative action measures (Minority Rights Group International), but these do not constitute concessions as defined here.
- In 2005 the Basic Law on Indigenous Peoples was passed (in Taiwan). It called for the establishment of autonomous zones for Taiwan's indigenous, among other things. It set a deadline for implementation (in 2008). This deadline was not met (Simon 2008: 7). The Basic Law on Indigenous Peoples was subsequently amended in 2015 and then again in 2018, and has since been implemented (Law & Regulations Database of The Republic of China (Taiwan) 2018). We code a concession but note that the extent of autonomy conferred is limited and mostly related to finances. Autonomous zones are small (confined to counties) and the head of each autonomous zone is appointed by the central government. [2015: autonomy concession]
- In 2016, President Tsai apologized to indigenous peoples on behalf of the government for historical injustices and announced the establishment of Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee under the Presidential Office. Furthermore, she promised to enact more laws to protect the political and cultural autonomy of indigenous people (Office of the

President Republic of China (Taiwan) 2016). We do not code a concession here as no concrete cultural rights of indigenous people are ensured at this point.

- The Indigenous Language Development Act was legislated in 2017, following the President's promise in the previous year (Law & Regulations Database of The Republic of China (Taiwan) 2017). The 2017 law significantly increased the use of aboriginal languages in the educational sphere, and it also pushed for the use of the languages in local governance (e.g., civil servants working in the autonomous zones have to know the local language). [2017: cultural rights concession]

### Regional autonomy

- The autonomous zones do not constitute meaningful autonomy (see above). [no autonomy]

### De facto independence

NA

### Major territorial changes

NA

### EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Indigenous Taiwanese
<i>Scenario</i>	No match/1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	71301000

### Power access

- EPR codes the Aboriginal Taiwanese only from 1996 onwards (before this they are considered irrelevant). EPR codes the Aboriginal Taiwanese as powerless from 1996 onwards. Since the Taiwanese polity was dominated by the local Han Chinese as well as those Han Chinese that came in after the KMT's retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the powerless code aptly describes the Aboriginal Taiwanese' position pre-1996 too. [1988-2020: powerless]

### Group size

- We follow EPR. [0.02]

### Regional concentration

- Taiwan's indigenous peoples tend to live scattered across the eastern part of the island; they do not make up a majority in any of the eastern provinces. The province with the highest aboriginal share is Taipung (approx. 36%). Approx. 80,000 aboriginal people live in this province, or 15% of the total population of approx. 530,000. Aboriginal people make up 28% of the neighboring Hualien province's population. On this basis, we code the indigenous Taiwanese as not

concentrated. For the data see here: <http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/month/m1-04.xls>. [not concentrated]

## Kin

- According to EPR there are no kin groups. Older MAR releases note the Philippine's Filipinos, but newer releases do not. Thus, we do not code kin. [no kin]

## Sources

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