

Title: Taiwan's mountain policies and the poverty of the indigenous people

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Abstract:

Indigenous people make up two per cent of the population in Taiwan. They are easily distinguishable from the Han majority by their second-class living conditions. There is overwhelming evidence of their relative deprivation. Their average income is half the national average. In the mountain indigenous villages, nine per cent of households are registered low-income, 11 times the national rate (cf. pp. 11-12). This research answers the following questions: what is the nature and dynamic of indigenous people's poverty? How can their situation be improved? In this thesis, a number of the structural cause of indigenous people's poverty are investigated, with the state mountain policies found to be responsible for causing, or at least enhancing, the indigenous people's poverty. At all levels of society, the inequitable power relationships between the dominant Han and the dominated indigenous people determine the latter's inferior social status. Discrimination is responsible for the disadvantaged position of indigenous people in the state apparatus and systems, including education, employment, healthcare, economic development, and land rights. A qualitative research design, combined with documentary and secondary data analysis, is used in this thesis to explore the dynamics of indigenous people's poverty. In-depth interviews were conducted mainly in Fushing Hsiang, one of the most populous mountain indigenous villages in northern Taiwan. In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 low-income household members about their experiences of living in poverty. Seven sub-village heads were interviewed about policy level issues. In addition, five former Fushing Hsiang villagers who now live in urban areas were interviewed to investigate their adjustment to urban life and how they cope in their daily interactions with the Han.