

**A GLOCALISED NATIONAL NARRATIVE:  
A SIRAYA-BASED DISCOURSE IN THE TAI-GI PUPPET  
PLAY *BLITZKRIEG SIRAYA***

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**ABSTRACT**

*Globalisation, which has become a buzzword in current debates, is said to deconstruct and replace nations in "the era of post-nationalism." On the other hand, fear of being inundated with globalism rekindles local consciousness, forging more "imagined communities" that are co-constituted by interlaced local liaisons. As a consequence, nationalism does not fade out, but undergoes a series of transformations. National narratives re-emerge with varied facets and more localised substantiation. *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, a Tai-gi puppet play marks this new breed of "glocalised national narrative"—a new discourse fermented by both globalism and localism. Debuting in 2010, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* receives much acclamation. It tells of how descendants of Han immigrants and Siraya, a lowland Austronesian people populating southern Taiwan, transcend mutual animosity and fight together against an evil spirit to defend their homeland. The narrative gives a vivid picture of Siraya's matrifocal culture, challenging Han-dominated ethnic stereotypes and male-centric gender bias. Two other factors distinguish *Blitzkrieg Siraya* from other Taiwan-made puppet plays. Unlike Taiwan's traditional puppet shows, which are confined to Chinese framework, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* is based on Taiwan's historical context. Moreover, it is the first Tai-gi puppet play that highlights Sirayans, who were barely mentioned in the Chinese-Han-dominant discourse. *Blitzkrieg Siraya* re-addresses Taiwan as a multi-ethnic society with solid Austronesian roots. Its production corresponds to the Zeitgeist or structure of feeling, which is shaped by intertwining agents, such as worldwide indigenes' movements since the second half of the twentieth century, Taiwan's recent political liberation, Taiwan's Austronesian activism since the 1980s, and the ensuing lowland Austronesian revitalisation in the last two decades. Furthermore, the play pinpoints challenges that Taiwan must face in today's globalised surroundings, and provides "imagined" solutions to interethnic problems. The article explores*

*how entangled dynamics co-effectuate a new national narrative in Blitzkrieg Siraya, and what the new discursive space signifies in a glocal perspective.*

**Keywords:** puppet play, Siraya, *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, indigenisation, national narrative

## INTRODUCTION

*Blitzkrieg Siraya*<sup>1</sup> emerges as the first Tai-gi puppet play that features Siraya, a Tai-lam<sup>2</sup>-based lowland Austronesian group.<sup>3</sup> It articulates a new breed of nationalism that is co-effectuated by globalism and localism. Illustrating a friendship between Sirayans and descendants of Han settlers, the play re-imagines Taiwan as a multi-ethnic community.<sup>4</sup> Since its debut in February 2010, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* has received positive feedback from general audience and art critics. During the four performances in Tai-lam, a historic city in southern Taiwan, and two in Taipei, the capital located in the north, auditoriums were crowded with enthusiastic spectators. They swarmed to the front stage, queuing up to take pictures with puppets and artists after the screen curtain dropped (*Metropolis Poetry Forum* 15 November 2010: 5; *Song* 26 September 2010: 28–32).<sup>5</sup> Apart from this, critics praise the lingual representation and the Taiwan-oriented motif of the play (Tenn 2010: 7–18; Liao 2010: 15–19). An artistic product and social practice, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* invents a discourse, addressing interlaced key issues in contemporary Taiwan such as ethnicity, femininity, gender relations, national narratives, localisation and globalisation.

The play was produced by Tai-lam-based Ong Ge-beng Puppet Theater, and co-sponsored by National Museum of Taiwan Literature and Tai-lam County Government. Written by Tai-gi poet Tan Kian-seng, the script consists of ten acts, unveiling scores of events occurring within a few days. The performance lasts approximately 90 minutes and comes with five pop songs composed by Chia Beng-iu. A Kim-kong puppet play, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* entertains the audience with a fast-paced flow and hyperbolic dramatic effects.<sup>6</sup>

The play starts with a crisis in which the Black Devil Ridge, a gang nestling in a mountainous region in eastern Tai-lam called Tevorang,

kidnaps Sirayan maidens and kills them as sacrifice to demons.<sup>7</sup> The gang is manipulated by the Black Devil, an evil spirit that masterminds a war against Sirayans. One day, Tio Nga-eng, a Han maiden from downtown Tai-lam, is abducted by some gangsters, but manages to escape. With a wounded foot, she is chased and almost re-captured by her abductors. At this critical moment, Tong Bou-hun, a Sirayan female warrior from a Tevorang village, dispels the gangsters, rescuing Nga-eng, and brings her home for medical treatment. Bou-hun's elder brother Bou-nia, who is a communal leader and an expert in herbal medicine, attends to Nga-eng's injury. Meanwhile, a Han young man Koan Che-bun takes the mission to seek Nga-eng. When he travels to a forest in Tavorang, he happens to rescue Bou-hun, who is surrounded by throngs of gangsters and slightly injured. Che-bun escorts Bou-hun home, meeting her brother and Nga-eng. At that time the black Devil gang is about to march a massive assault to destroy Tevorang. As Che-bun and Nga-eng hear about it, they decide to stay and brave the impending peril with their Sirayan friends. An *inib*,<sup>8</sup> and Flying Aborigine, who is a legendary Sirayan racing genius, also join in the defensive mobilisation.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, with the help of Sirayan deity *alid*<sup>10</sup> and brave souls of eight leopards, the Sirayan-Han camp eventually triumphs. Towards the end, the play culminates with two interethnic weddings—Bou-hun marries Che-bun, and Nga-eng marries Bou-nia. Equally noteworthy, the two marriages are "crisscrossed" in terms of gender and ethnic identity, forming two "contrasting pairs"—the first couple consisting of a Sirayan wife and a Han husband, while the second, a Han wife and a Sirayan husband.

Two aspects distinguish *Blitzkrieg Siraya* from traditional Taiwan puppetry. Unlike the majority of the genre, which is confined to a Chinese framework, *Blitzkrieg Siraya*'s setting pivots around southern Taiwan in the early 19th century. Furthermore, the play transcends the Han/Chinese-centric ideology reproduced in China-based puppet plays. Embracing multi-ethnic views arising in Taiwan in the late 20th century, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* highlights lowland Austronesian heritages, which are stigmatised in the dominant Chinese-Han discourse. In addition, the play harbours an imagined solution to interethnic conflict. Repressed under KMT's reign, interethnic tension has ravaged Taiwan since the martial law was lifted. In this play, Taiwan is re-envisioned as a multi-ethnic nation in

which Austronesian peoples and their Han counterparts shoulder equal responsibilities in co-constructing their homeland.

Interweaving romance with warfare, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* resembles most national sagas that mingle nationalism with a love story between a macho male hero and a passive female heroine (Sommer 1990: 87–92). However, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* marks Siraya's matrifocal characteristics—in the play, the Sirayan female protagonist takes initiatives in courtship and military action, both of which are male-only "privileges" in the Chinese-Han male-centric mainstream.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the play portrays Sirayan culture in detail, translating to a more locally-based and substantiated representation of Taiwanness.

The multi-ethnic national narrative conveyed in *Blitzkrieg Siraya* involves various dimensions, such as influences of worldwide indigenes' movements, Taiwan's post-martial law liberation, Austronesian activism since the 1980s and the ensuing lowland Austronesian revitalisation in the recent two decades. Additionally, it mirrors the power struggles between Taiwanese nationalism and the de-nationalising pan-Chinese campaign, along with dialectics between globalisation and indigenisation.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS**

In this article, the author takes a cultural study approach to redefine keywords, such as globalisation, nationalism, localisation and glocal, and discuss relationships between them.

### **Nationalism vs. Globalisation**

Appadurai defines globalisation as an uneven economic process that creates a fragmented and uneven distribution of knowledge, learning, teaching, cultural criticism and other resources. As a consequence, globalisation triggers anxiety (2001: 1–5), while it stimulates new forms of consciousness (Turner 2004: 83). Concerns about globalisation encircle how the world-sweeping tendency impacts upon national and local identities. It is frequently inquired how the flows of global capital affect sovereignty of

nation state, if we shall ultimately live in a borderless world, or if local cultures shall be wiped out eventually.

So far scholars have debated on the dialectics between the local, the national and the global. Many predict that a crisis, though, globalisation does not necessarily lead to the demise of nationalism or local culture; instead globalisation may ferment transformations and prompt re-definition of both nationalism and local culture.

Horng-luen Wang rebuffs the concept of "post-nationalism," contending "the global and the national are two sides of the same coin that went hand in hand in history" (2004: 24–25). In Bourdieu's words, nationalism remains "the global *habitus* of our time." Accordingly, the nation state reproduces the structure of the world and lays a cognitive foundation for people to tackle the social reality. Wang borrows the concept of "banal nationalism," a phrase coined by Michael Billig, pointing out that nationalism encompasses a wide spectrum ranging from the political/territorial scopes to cultural/cognitive terrains (1995: 37–59).

Likewise, Tim Edensor brings forward "quotidian nationalism," stressing that national identity is closely linked with popular culture and everyday life. Re-examining studies by Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson, Smith and Hutchinson, Edensor considers theories of these predecessor scholars "reductive cultural perspectives," confining nationalism to "rigid," "undynamic" ranges of "high," "official" and "traditional" ranges, while failing to acknowledge the fact that nationalism permeates and operates in "popular and everyday cultural expression" (2002: 1–10). Pending the current global disposition, he claims that national identity should be redistributed "in diverse forms, such as sports, festivals, landscapes and various kinds of performance and cultural practices" (ibid: 11–35).

William Thornton shares the idea that nationalism "can take many forms" and can be represented by non-mainstream local cultures (2004: 8–9). Indigenisation, which involves resurgence of local awareness and revitalisation of local heritages, should broaden and enrich nationalism, effectively resisting global wipeout.

## Localisation vs. Globalisation: A Glocal Response

The academic world also criticises the newly ascending class who take advantage of the current global trend—the so-called "liberal globalists" or "the global elite."

According to Appadurai, globalisation is "a cover term" that produces problems in local forms and contexts and creates increased inequalities both within and across societies (2001: 6).

Cultural pluralism, which has been espoused by liberal globalists and prevails in contemporary global context, is criticised for lacking a core value. Turner points out that the newly arising global elites apply post-modern strategies and view the world only as "contrasting signs of difference" and "randomised movements." During the unidirectional flow of global capital into private corporate owners, everyone is reduced to a consumer or a producer (2004: 104–107). Friedman notes that cultural pluralism has been turned into cultural products and consumed by the global elites. The so-called hybridity becomes "a kind of furnishing of [the elites'] existence" and "a new kind of self-representation" (2004: 64–65).

Referring to Pheng Cheah's remark on globalism, Chu Yin Wai worries that cosmopolitanism may turn into "closet idealism." "Deceptive neutrality of multiculturalism" masks underlying inequalities and class differences, and excuses "the existing privileged" for maintaining a distance from their society, exonerating them from taking social responsibilities (2004: 42–43).

Thornton contends that the new global elite have problems with "ideological inertia." Indifferent to local situations, they "depoliticize the public in the name of globalization" (2004: 4–7).

Scholars hope to resolve the problems of globalisation with local activism. Appadurai recommends "grassroots globalisation or "globalisation from below," which contrasts with the liberal elite-centred top-down globalisation<sup>12</sup> and urges readers to help underprivileged people and "democratise the flow of knowledge." With indigenous action, it is likely that transnational advocacy network can be invented (2001: 6–20). Similarly, Thornton affirms that "the cultural local *Other* remains a site of real difference" and challenges the "meltdown" of "liberal globalism" (2004: 8–9).

Although globalisation poses a threat of wiping out local traditions, it also stirs up a sense of crisis, fermenting incorporation of local essences and global elements. Localism and globalism are not necessarily in a bi-polar or zero-sum face-off. As a reverse consequence, globalisation stimulates rejuvenations of indigenous communities. For instance, the global demand of Jamaican music CDs leads to the boom of black subaltern patois and Jamaican songs with lyrics in this vernacular (Paul 2010: 124–130). In Africa, the local tradition of story-telling social participation, incorporated with a global hue of hybridity, sparks the innovations of African art (Brickhill 2010: 113–123).

As Chuang observed, contemporary grassroots activism features identity politics. Recent social movements encircle politics of meaning and identity, replacing the previous concern with relations of production, such as controversies over pay, work hours and the right to strike, etc. The competition for "historicity," which renders "the capacity for self-representation" and "the rights of the subject," becomes "the main stake of social struggle" (2004: 13–15). To accomplish self-empowerment, underprivileged local groups must take the initiative to re-articulate their historicity. Locally-based mobilisations in different places share certain dispositions; all of them involve reconnections to land, people, ethnicity, history and identity. Through transnational connection and international cooperation, local movements erect global significance and reshape new perception of local and global circumstances (*ibid.*: 13–21).

Raymond Williams defined "structure of feeling" as "the culture of a period," "the particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation." Although "it is as firm and definite," "it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity" (1961/1994: 61). "Structure of feeling" represents the world view of a community in a specific temporal-spatial surrounding. Whether detectable or not, this structure is co-constructed by multiple factors intertwined in a society.

As Friedman speculated, human experience is always localised and embedded in a specific social milieu; this is also true for their encounter with globalisation. Cognition is not merely constituted or practiced through a single process (2004: 55–56), but goes through a dialectical process, during which heterogeneous global, national and local agents intersect and interact with each other. The article adopts Friedman's definition of the term

"glocal" to elaborate pluralised interrelationships (ibid.: 55) in the Siraya-based national narrative in *Blitzkrieg Siraya*. "Glocal" network enhances the shifts of Taiwanese structure of feeling, prompting the play to readdress an Austronesian-oriented multi-ethnic horizon.

## **TAIWAN'S CONTEMPORARY SOCIO-POLITICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT**

### **Taiwan's Socio-political Developments**

After World War II, with the independence of pre-colonies and the surge of human right, indigenes in many countries launched movements to reclaim their identities. Indigene-based organisations have been burgeoning, and the collective action they mobilised awoke consciousness and empathy around the globe. In 1988, a Taiwanese indigenous activist attended a United Nations (UN) workshop on Indigenous Populations, marking an unprecedented participation of Taiwanese Austronesian peoples in international symposium (Hsieh 2006: 37–50). From then on, Taiwan's Austronesian delegates showed up in more international forums, learning "glocal" lessons from experiences of indigenes in other countries.<sup>13</sup>

In Taiwan, Austronesian peoples have been oppressed in the last four centuries by different colonial regimes. In the 1980s Taiwan's indigenous movement arose,<sup>14</sup> coinciding with democratisation. The momentum culminated in the wake of the martial law's lift in 1987. Social activism sprouted as previously-oppressed groups, such as Austronesian peoples, victims of political persecution, Hakka and Hoklo groups, started reclaiming their collective rights. At that time, indigenous activists mainly consisted of intelligentsia from "mountainous" communities. Inspired by their "mountain" counterparts, lowland Austronesian activists launched an awareness-raising movement in the 1990s (Phoann et al. 2003: Preface IV).<sup>15</sup> Since then Siraya has been playing a vital role in "the second wave" Austronesian revitalisation.<sup>16</sup>

In actuality, lowland Austronesian activism had been seeded in the previous decade. As the ruling KMT's control became porous, researchers dared to tackle previously suppressed topics. During the martial-law era,

lowland Austronesian peoples were seldom studied or mentioned in the Chinese-Han mainstream. However, since the 1980s, lowland Austronesian issues acquired more discussion. Opportunities to publish among academic-cultural circles have blossomed.<sup>17</sup> Sirayan heritage, such as the Sinkan dialect, has been re-evaluated. Ancient land contracts rendered by Han characters and the Sinkan Romanisation were also re-printed.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, population data of the Japanese era, which specified lowland Austronesian identity, were rediscovered.<sup>19</sup> These documents evidenced Siraya's existence and the unique position of the people in Taiwan's history. The boom of lowland Austronesian research impacted not merely lowland communities, but the entire Taiwanese society. Many people began to explore lowland Austronesian heritage. Prior to that, they had barely heard of or talked about relevant issues; some of them even denied their own lowland origin for fear of discrimination.

One hallmark of Siraya's revitalisation lies in the resurrection of the ceremony *pakasalan*,<sup>20</sup> which is held annually in Sirayan communities in Tai-lam, Ko-hiong and the east coast and draws much attention in Taiwan's society. The tradition was severed for more than half a century as a consequence of multiple colonisation and sinicisation. During that time only two Sirayan villages in Tai-lam, Thau-sia and Kapuasuah had persisted in practicing this religious tradition, retaining vital resources for contemporary Siraya revitalisation.

The rekindling of Siraya awareness can also be attributed to local political maneuvers. In 2005, Tai-lam County Government declared Siraya the local indigenous people. It was the first time in history that a government acknowledged Siraya's legal status as an indigenous group. In the following year, the Committee of Siraya Aborigines' Affairs of Tai-lam County was founded. From 2009 to 2010, according to the local government, 12,478 people applied to change their ethnic identity from Han to Siraya. On 2 May 2009, nearly 5,000 demonstrators, including Sirayans and delegates of other lowland Austronesian groups, took to the street in front of the presidential palace in Taipei. They urged the central government to recognise Siraya as an indigenous people; however, their demand was rejected by President Ma Ying-chiu's administration.

This setback pushed the Siraya issue from the local/national level into an international niche. On 2 February 2010, on behalf of Sirayans, Tai-lam

County Government kept pressuring the central government, requiring a constitutional interpretation of Siraya's ethnic status (Siraya Cultural Map of Tainan 2010). Meanwhile, Sirayan activists turned to the UN and filed a suit against Ma's government for infringing Sirayans' basic rights. In early May, the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human started to investigate the case (Iunn 23 May 2010). Even until now, controversies over Siraya's identity remain unresolved.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, more and more literary and art works, museum exhibits, symposia and workshops about lowland Austronesian groups have been staged. With a surge in lowland Austronesian awareness, not only did lowland members speak up, but descendants of Han settlers, the majority of Taiwan's population, began to re-explore their Austronesian "roots." Coincidentally, in the dawn of the 21st century, new genetic evidence confirms that 85 percent of the so-called "Han" population in Taiwan, including Hakka and Hoklo, are biologically related to Austronesians (Lim 2010: 77–95). This genetic discovery contradicts the once-prevailing belief that assumes the majority of Taiwanese people are Chinese Han. Such a Han-centric racial myth actually helped solidify Chinese-Han hegemony and the legitimacy of KMT's rule, which claimed to represent Chinese-Han orthodoxy. Buttressed by the solid scientific evidence, increasingly more lowland Austronesian descendants became comfortable in asserting their ethnic identity. More and more Hoklo and Hakka descendants, who had previously identified themselves as Chinese-Han, re-examined their mestizo status and proclaimed their lowland Austronesian liaison.<sup>22</sup> The old Chinese-Han-centred interethnic mapping began to crumble; a new historical vision gradually took form, fermenting a boom of Siraya writing in Tai-gi literature and other forms of cultural practice.

### **Impacts of Socio-political Movements on Taiwan's Cultural Practice**

In 2000, a Tai-gi opera *India Coral Reblooming*, produced by Taipei-based Chen Meiyun Taiwanese Opera Troupe, debuted in the National Theater as a precursory piece highlighting lowland Austronesianness. Tai-gi poems and novels encircling Siraya have been emerging in great numbers since the dawn of the new millennium. The phenomenon concerns more than a shift of artistic taste. As a matter of fact, it transmits multilateral significances

and marks a turning point of Taiwan's identity politics. As Tai-gi and other Taiwanese vernaculars have been marginalised in the Mandarin-favoured Chinese-Han hegemony, the persistence in writing in Tai-gi creates a location of resistance. More significantly, the frequent exposure of Siraya in Tai-gi literature hints at the formation of a new interethnic alliance, foregrounding the potential of solidarity among ethnolinguistic communities.

Tan Lui, a pioneer of Siraya writing in Tai-gi, speculated how lowland Austronesian agents may affect the reshaping of Taiwan identity:<sup>23</sup>

The hegemonic Chinese-Han-centric historical view is biased and distorting. Over the years it has hindered Taiwanese people from cultivating confidence and a genuine cognition about themselves. To deconstruct the Chinese-Han framework, lowland Austronesian consciousness plays an important role. Moreover, lowland Austronesian elements facilitate the reconstruction of Taiwan as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural nation. They enhance the formation of a new Taiwan identity (Email letter on 19 November 2006).

Another Tai-gi novelist, Oo Tiong-siong, confessed that being dubbed as a Han descendent afflicted him "with a strong sense of guilt." He had been distraught whenever he recalled Taiwan's past of multi-colonisation and the tragic fate of lowland Austronesian indigenes.<sup>24</sup> However, with newly-acquired lowland Austronesian consciousness, it seems that new possibilities are emerging. Furthermore, with a conversion to Christianity, he has the courage to tackle the atrocities committed by his Han forebears and to reclaim himself "a lowland Austronesian descendant reborn through Christianity"<sup>25</sup> (Interview 30 March 2012).

Such shifts of identity politics correspond to Melissa Brown's study on the transformation of identity. In her observation, identity is not merely a choice of an individual or a group but a product of interaction, created within certain social, political, cultural and economic contexts. "Identity must be negotiated," she stressed, "Identities of individuals are socially constructed" (2004: 13–19). Similarly, Stuart Hall noticed that identity is

connected to meaning and representation and that identity must be shared culturally, produced, contested and exchanged within power relations of a specific socio-political frame. Therefore, identity is always a constantly changing process, not a static entity (1997: 1–11).

Paradoxically, Tai-gi writers' interest in Siraya may originate from the profound Holonisation of Sirayan communities. This inclination may also relate to Siraya's unique historical experience and the locality of its original stronghold Tai-lam, as mentioned. After the Sirayan vernacular disappeared in the 19th century, Sirayan descendants picked up Tai-gi. Since then Tai-gi has become the prevalent language among Sirayan and Holo communities.

As Melissa Brown noted, in the Dutch Formosa era, many male immigrants from Hok-kian, China spoke the Holo tongue and married Sirayan women. The prevalence of intermarriages continued for several generations.<sup>26</sup> Pressured by the Chinese Han mainstream, many Sirayans and descendants of mixed peoples switched their identities to Holo and Han, forgetting or abolishing their Sirayan ancestry. They followed Han customs, passing on Sirayan heritages within or along with sinicised rituals.<sup>27</sup> The high percentage of intermarriages is evidenced in recent genetic discovery, as afore-stated. As a consequence, it is sometimes hard to tell a pure-blood Sirayan from a mixed Hoklo descendant as they are so similar in appearance, language and behaviour. Many Hoklo descendants are shocked when they learn about the existence of Siraya and the close tie between the two communities. The shared linguistic, cultural and genetic elements prompt Hoklo people, especially Tai-gi writers and researchers, to have special feelings for Siraya.<sup>28</sup>

As the long-repressed Taiwan consciousness and grassroots activism bloomed after the lift of martial law, the previously hegemonic Chinese camp also mounted a de-Taiwan campaign. Dissatisfied with the perspective of democratisation and indigenisation, members of pro-China groups have been attempting to (mis)represent Taiwanness as chaos and valuelessness. Unlike their predecessors who boldly advocated Chinese ideology, Chinese camps in the post martial-law period took a subtler approach. Applying the de-constructing strategy of post-structuralism and postmodernism, they wielded post-nationalism and pan-Chinese narratives in the name of globalism. Well-known Mandarin writers, such as Chu Tien-hsin and Su

Wei-chen, voiced such a de-Taiwan stance. They both came from veteran communities, and are prestigious among Taiwan's Mandarin literary circles.<sup>29</sup>

In the novella "The Ancient Capital," Chu expresses a strong sentiment of loss and disdain upon Taiwan's post-martial law transformation. As Chen Peng-hsin observed, Chu's "nostalgia for an 'imagined' China" prevents her from reconstructing her Taiwan identity (2006: Abstract). The same attitude towards "Taiwanisation" re-emerges in another novella "Taro Urashima Long Time Ago," in which Chu ridicules the morality of former political prisoners who were persecuted by the KMT during the martial law era (Chang 1992: 12–15). The de-constructing schemes in Chu's works reveal her anxiety about Taiwanisation, and more importantly, the fledging Taiwan nationalism. Her embracement of de-nationalisation, to a certain degree, mirrors her implicit consensus with Chinese nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

Su Wei-chen's novel *Silent Island* features a complex bilinear schema, fragmented narratives and entangled relations between protagonists<sup>31</sup> (Lim 1994: 279–292). The female protagonist Chen-mien, who symbolises Taiwan, leads a promiscuous life and wanders to various places in the Asia Pacific region. Chen-mien's sexual activities, ceaseless journey and disorientation reflect Su's unease with the emergence of Taiwan identity. Cross-ethnic imagination in the work is subtle but noteworthy. A descendant of the Chinese Mainlanders from the veterans' community, Su portrays the Taiwanese protagonist Chen-mien as a wanton woman, which hints at a distortion and (mis)interpretation of Taiwanness.

The representation of Siraya in Tai-gi literature forms in a timely fashion a dialectical field against the de-Taiwan campaign. It manifests more depth and substantiality of the indigenisation, and voices a local response to Chinese narratives and the globalising drive. As Liao Tiau-beng points out, Taiwan's Austronesian issue is not merely pertinent to human rights or political manoeuvre, but extends to a broader horizon of multiple ethnicities. Lowland Austronesian activism parallels the struggle of multiethnic Taiwanese nationalism, as both of them endeavour to re-erect their historicities (2005: 131–132, 140). Immersed in such *Zeitgeist*, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* came into formation.

## THE PRODUCTION OF *BLITZKRIEG SIRAYA*

### The Cooperation between Tan and Ong

Both the playwright Tan Kian-seng and the puppet artist Ong Ge-beng are from Tai-lam. Tan was born in 1960 in Ta-pa-ni, a village in the hilly region of east Tai-lam, where Tevorang Sirayans have been residing. At age 25 Tan moved to downtown Tai-lam to run a small restaurant. Then, he worked on cultural projects with the local government. At age 26 he commenced a writing career.<sup>32</sup> Like most Taiwanese writers of his generation, he first used the dominant language of Mandarin for creative writing. In 2004, he switched to his native tongue Tai-gi. Having written in Mandarin for 24 years, Tan said that eventually he realised that "language is not simply a communicative tool, but a container of spontaneous overflow of emotions and thoughts." Nevertheless, he perceived a bottleneck of Tai-gi literature: since most Taiwanese people have not had opportunities to develop the ability to read Tai-gi, they fail to enjoy literature in this language. In a vicious cycle, the limited readership hinders the prevalence of Tai-gi and vice versa. Later it occurred to him that drama could offer a breakthrough to attract more Tai-gi lovers. In summer, 2009, Tan met Ong, a puppeteer with decades of experience and the director of Ong Ge-beng Super Puppet Theater. Sharing ideas about Tai-gi cultural products, they soon became partners, and within a few months produced *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, the initial fruit of their collaboration.

Born in 1954 in Sian-hoa, a village in the plain of Tai-lam, in an impoverished family, Ong displayed a talent and enthusiasm for oral arts since his childhood.<sup>33</sup> At age 16, he took an apprenticeship with a then-prominent puppet artist Ng Chun-hiong. In 1978, with the help of colleagues, Ong founded a puppet troupe "Ngoo-chiu Toa-jiat-mng," which was renamed after its founder eleven years later. Ong Ge-beng Puppet Theater was awarded "conservatory group of cultural heritage" by both the Central government and Tai-lam County Government.<sup>34</sup> However, like the majority of folk arts groups in Taiwan, Ong's troupe has been struggling to survive. Although traditional Tai-gi puppet art was acclaimed as the most salient Taiwan symbol,<sup>35</sup> both Tai-gi, the language it embodies, and the art *per se* are in fact declining.<sup>36</sup>

Ong attributes the crisis to lack of "good, new scripts," complaining that scripts of puppet plays have been few and of low quality. As a consequence, performers have no choice but "keep recycling clichés," and the spectatorship is hard to expand. With his forty-year tenure as a puppeteer, Ong is disappointed with the Chinese narratives conveyed in most of the puppet play scripts. Framed in China's historical context, they kept reproducing traditional Confucian values, such as loyalty to emperors, fidelity or chastity, all of which no longer meet the ethics of Taiwan's democratic and multicultural society.

Additionally, Ong was dissatisfied with the once-prevailing "fighter" puppet plays, which were known for abstracting from any specific temporal or spatial settings.<sup>37</sup> Ong thought that the breed still transmitted an implicit Chinese framework as most of them are adapted from Chinese folk tales or legends. Moreover, he criticised that "fighter" plays lacked solid historical groundwork and fell into "empty and valueless" war spectacles. Ong asked, "Why not perform a show based on Taiwan's materials? Why not produce a play about the Taiwanese people and our homeland?" In his view, despite the fact that Taiwan's puppet play was transmitted from southern China in the mid-19th century,<sup>38</sup> it has gone through a series of metamorphosis after the incipient stage of "transplantation" and should become "Taiwanised."

In the mid-1990s, Ong started seeking new scripts. In 2009, he met Tan Kian-seng. Both of them have strong Taiwan consciousness and persist in promoting their native tongue of Tai-gi.<sup>39</sup> With Ong's encouragement, Tan promised to write a script for a Taiwan-grounded Tai-gi puppet play. From August to November of 2009, Tan worked on *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, his first script of this genre. The entire work is rendered in Han characters, as Tan admitted that he was more accustomed to Han characters than Romanisation. Ong was thrilled the moment Tan told him about the title of their first collaboration.

Ong admitted that initially the script was difficult to put into practice, as Tan was not familiar with the confinements of puppetry and wrote passages too complicated to perform. Nevertheless, Ong happily took the challenge. During stage practice and rehearsal, the script was revised several times in consideration of performing effects. Whenever Tan completed a passage, Ong's troupe would have a "trial play." Tan and Ong explained that puppet performance is not as astute and flexible as real-human drama.

Unlike human actors who move and gesture freely, puppets on stage are manipulated by puppeteers in a narrow space behind the screen. Thus a script must fit both the environment of a stage and the ranges of movements that puppets are allowed to demonstrate for audience sitting in a long distance.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Orality of Tai-gi Puppetry**

In light of language, Tan said that he tried to make dialogues interesting, colloquial and close to daily life "within permitted limits." He gave two examples from *Blitzkrieg Siraya* to illustrate his criteria of word choice. In Act Two, a gangster of the Black Devil Ridge tells his Japanese colleague, "Don't play sa-kuh-rah" (2010: 43). The remark makes the audience laugh. The word "sa-kuh-rah" is a loanword which originally means "cherry blossom" in Japanese. Adopted by Tai-gi, "sa-kuh-rah" is given a new definition of "tricks." Additionally, it is used as a slang term within Taiwan's underground circle. In a latter passage in the same act, another gangster says, "every inverted bowl covers a lie," which indicates another underground password, meaning that every gangster has her/his unique surviving technique (ibid.: 46). Nevertheless, Tan sticks with certain aesthetic standards in his adoption of foreign and new terms. Both Tan and Ong reject the trendy "Mandarinised Tai-gi," which transliterates a Mandarin script into Tai-gi without considering the different syntactic, semantic and lexical structures between the two languages.

Since the 1970s the "Mandarinised" style has prevailed in contemporary Tai-gi puppetry, particularly in the well-known Pili series. Although many Tai-gi native speakers perceive "Mandarinised Tai-gi" as unnatural and incomprehensible, it becomes popular with the younger, Mandarin-speaking generation, who make up a solid portion of Pili fans. However, many of them barely understand Tai-gi, while enjoying spectacles produced by new technology (Goo 2005: 400).<sup>41</sup> Despite the prevalence of Mandarinisation, Tan and Ong insist that Tai-gi orality should play a key role in sustaining aesthetic value of Tai-gi puppet plays.<sup>42</sup>

Their views mirror debates on the introduction of written form into Tai-gi puppetry. The performing art had a vibrant oral tradition, and traditionally came with no scripts (Tan 2007: 98). Since the rise of televised

Tai-gi puppet plays in the 1960s, all of the programs have been required to provide Mandarin scripts and titles in Han characters. Stripped of vernacular education, most young playwrights can only write Mandarin scripts, leaving puppet artists to translate them into oral Tai-gi. As more and more Mandarin-speaking young audience comprehend the plot by reading Mandarin titles rather than listening, in consideration of spectatorship, "Mandarinised Tai-gi" is adopted as a trendy style. Consequently, the orality and originality of Tai-gi puppetry were altered. Its aesthetic status as a form of Tai-gi-based oral art also became questionable<sup>43</sup> (ibid.: 232; Tan 2008: 99–101; Goo 2005: 398–400).

Scholars noticed that the written form and Mandarinisation have impacted on Tai-gi puppet plays. Nevertheless, some of them embrace theories on hybridity and globalisation, celebrate the mixed-up style, and defend the orality-reduced phenomenon as an innovation (Goo 2005: 398). Others, however, worry that since "Mandarinised Tai-gi" is Mandarin-based, the disposition interferes with the traditionally Tai-gi-oriented oral art.<sup>44</sup> Another concern is that Mandarinisation in the name of hybridisation depoliticises Tai-gi puppetry. As these scholars observed, during the process of Mandarinisation, Mandarin remains as a standard language, while Tai-gi is susceptible to changes. Apparently Mandarinisation continues to dominate Taiwan's vernaculars in the post-martial law stage. Scholars contended that accepting the trend signals surrender to KMT-implemented Mandarin-privileged language policy and to the Mandarin-centred Chinese hegemony, which is often camouflaged by the name of pan-Chineseness or globalisation. To counter it, they insist that Tai-gi orality in Tai-gi puppet plays should be preserved as a site of resistance (Li 2007: VII–X; Tan 2008: 5–7, 99–113).

These scholars' viewpoints correspond to Stuart Hall's contention that cultural globalisation in terms of cultural production does not employ balanced power interchange. "The cultural field is not open or equal. It is not an 'even playing field,'" he says (2010: xii). Likewise, Appadurai describes globalisation as "an uneven economic process that creates a fragmented and uneven distribution" of "resources for learning, teaching and cultural criticism..." (2001: 4–5).

### **Music, Costume, Other Devices and Feedback**

Ong considers music "the soul of performance" in Kim-kong puppetry. Tan wrote the lyrics for five songs in *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, and introduced musician Chia Beng-yu to Ong's troupe. Ong loved the songs Chia composed for *Blitzkrieg Siraya*. In addition, he was impressed by Chia's commitment to Tai-gi and Taiwan's local culture despite their meagre profit and prestige. Born in 1969, Chia was already prestigious for his collaboration with well-known Mandarin pop singers. In fact he could have "earned more" by working on Mandarin music. Accustomed to the production of Mandarin songs, though, Chia was willing to spend a longer "brewing time" studying the cadence of Tai-gi lyrics.

Regarding the design of puppets, both Tan and Ong agreed that puppets must be "properly beautified" to fulfil aesthetic requirements. Before production, they researched Sirayan traditional costume, only to find that old-day Sirayan clothing were too dark and too ragged; in Ong's words, "just a piece of shredded cloth." Therefore, they took samples from traditional costumes of other Taiwanese Austronesian groups, borrowed their design, and re-invented costumes for Sirayan roles in the play. "We tried to make the costumes more colourful and ornamented, more view-worthy," Tan explained. The puppet representing the Sirayan woman Bou-hun is dressed in a red hair band and a red jacket with colourful bead embroidery and an emerald green skirt. Ong did not think that such re-invented ensemble was inauthentic. Rather, he stressed that a play is a representation, not a de facto historical record; therefore, accuracy might not be his first priority. In a play highlighting Sirayans, known for their matrifocal tradition, the Sirayan female protagonist is the most crucial role and should emerge with splendid costume to match her significant status: "She must be well-dressed," Ong concluded.

He gave more examples of necessary adjustment. In Act Four, the Han female protagonist Tio Nga-eng, who is in the woods and injured, takes a palanquin with a yellow cloth roof and pink curtains on two sides. Ong explained that according to Siraya's customs, Nga-eng should have sat in a simply-made bamboo carrier made of bamboo stalks picked in the wilderness. However, for better visual effects, Ong decided to replace a carrier with a palanquin.

Another example is the puppets' facial length. In *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, puppets' heads are made shorter than those of the extravagant "Russian doll" style, which prevails in the Pili serials and other Taiwanese puppet plays. Both Tan and Ong think that the puppets of a Taiwan-based play "should convey more oriental tints," not the occidental features that embody Euro-American-centric body aesthetics.

Regarding the play's effect, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* raised Siraya awareness among participants of its production. Ong recalled that during the process, many of his colleagues started to re-examine their Sirayan origin and study lowland Austronesian cultures. They expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to explore a previously-concealed part of Taiwan's heritages and to help rearticulate an ethnic community that had been excluded for so long by the Chinese-Han hegemony.

In the meanwhile, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* translates a thumb-up token to Siraya and other lowland Austronesian communities. Bok I-li, a Sirayan descendant from Tai-lam, shared her feedback: "It is important that the play initiates representations of indigenous peoples in the sphere of Tai-gi puppetry. The performance surpasses the Chinese-Han ideology. Undoubtedly it is an innovation. I hope it is not an exception, not the sole work about Siraya."<sup>45</sup>

## THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE IN *BLITZKRIEG SIRAYA*

Literature paves a foundation for nation-building. The national narrative presented in a literary work gives a "narrative supplement as history." It not only "becomes an independent and local expression," but also represents achievements of a nation, contributing to national consolidation (Sommer 1990: 76–79). In this light, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* is not the sole work that proclaims Sirayanness to re-erect Taiwanness. Several literary works have endeavoured the same since the surge of lowland Austronesian consciousness in the 1990s.

Iap Chioh-to's novel *The Last Descendant of Siraya* depicts a Sirayan woman who transitioned from the Japanese reign to the KMT period. Iap gives ample graphic description of the heroine's intercourse with five different men. Although the author focuses on Siraya, he seems to side with

the mainstream stance, portraying Siraya as an exotic people and equating Sirayan femininity with sexuality.

Ong Ka-siong's novel *To-hong Estuary* was published in 1997.<sup>46</sup> The story represents Tai-lam in the 17th century—spanning from the pre-Dutch days to the arrival of another colonial regime Koxingya. It describes how Mattao Sirayans were forced to abandon their home villages in the coast and embarked on an exodus into the mountainous inland.

Both of the novels are written in Mandarin. Though the two authors tackle the issue of ethnicity, they do not probe further into the dialectics between ethnicity and national identity.

As already noted, in 2000, the Tai-gi opera *India Coral Reblossoming* emerged as a pioneering Tai-gi work that deals with interethnic issues. It tells the love story between a Han male immigrant and an A-kau woman. Towards the end of the opera, a neighbouring mountain Austronesian tribe launches a military expedition against the A-kau people. To quench the fight, the Ching troops bombard the A-kau village and injure the heroine severely. After she passes away, her grief-stricken husband leaves for an exodus into the faraway hinterland with their new-born daughter and other relatives. Although the work addresses cultural differences and the unbalanced power relations between Han and Austronesians, it seems to deviate from the poignant historical reality—persecution committed by Chinese regimes and Chinese settlers was the main reason that triggered the collapse of lowland societies and the dispersion of the peoples. However, the opera seems to suggest that mountain Austronesian peoples should also be blamed for the tragedy of their lowland counterparts—the expedition mounted by mountain Austronesians prompts the Ching troops to resort to relentless bombardment. Such a representation violates historical truth. Endemic warfare between Austronesian groups, such as a headhunting expedition, compared with Chinese-Han invasion, was minor, and was unlikely to have resulted in repression from the Ching authorities and the destruction of an entire community.

Apart from this, the dying heroine tells her husband to bring their daughter back to China. This expression is bewildering. Does it suggest submission to Chinese-Han hegemony?

In 2008, Tan Lui's 270,000-word Tai-gi roman-fleuve, *A Supplementary History of My Homeland*, was published. Highlighting

multi-ethnicity and Taiwanese nationalism, it is the first Tai-gi fiction that features Siraya. The story reveals the interior diaspora of eight Sirayan families in the last two centuries—Sirayans are stripped of their land, and their lingual-culture is wiped out. Despite the predicaments, their descendants manage to re-construct their history and re-contextualise Sirayanness in Taiwan's contemporary surroundings. The work unravels multilateral dialogues between localism, inter-ethnicity, Sirayan femininities and Taiwan identity, demonstrating a strong decolonising spirit.

Likewise, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* takes Sirayanness as the bedrock for re-defining Taiwanness. Tan Kian-seng challenges previously Chinese-Han-centric racial views by bringing forward "a new horizon that incorporates Austronesian elements and erects a multiethnic position for re-imagining Taiwan." He said that Taiwan used to be placed in the 5000-year Chinese framework; however, "if human history is re-examined from a global perspective, it should be traced back to over 50 thousand years, during which Austronesian peoples played a significant part." Tan insists that genetic factors should not be priorities when considering interethnic relations. "The ethnic issue should transcend the realm of race and ascend onto spheres of culture and human dignity," he adds (Interview 10 March 2011).

### **The Metaphor of Battle**

In *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, interethnic animosity takes the metaphorical form of an evil spirit. The Black Devil embodies the trauma of interethnic atrocities, which have been committed in different periods and accumulated for hundreds of years. The anguish turned into a ghost of vengeance, straying in the wilderness and haunting every generation of Han and Austronesian offspring. It is the evil that dwells in the collective subconscious of the Taiwanese people and keeps inflicting them; therefore, every ethnic community must share the responsibility of resolving it. In Act Seven, the Sirayan *inib* Peh Chin-chu, standing in front of a crowd of Sirayan and Han warriors before the impending battle, pinpoints the problem by saying, "The battle is our destiny. To fight it is the destiny of all Sirayan descendants. Therefore, we must brave it and fight a good fight. Our enemies come from different ethnic groups. They come from the darkest, deepest abysses in the

human soul. They originate from the sin of greed and selfishness" (2010: 116–117). Such an evil spirit parallels "the original sin," the innate human evil.

The battle against the Black Devil's gang symbolises a catharsis for both Sirayans and Hans. Facing a common archenemy, the two former rivals lay down their mutual hatred and cooperate to accomplish a dangerous mission. Their relationship undergoes a renovation as they are transformed from opponents to partners. The battle, as a metaphor of comradeship during hardships, hints at a solution to Taiwan's interethnic tension.

On the other hand, the Black Devil's gang embodies the dominance of the former ruling class in the post-martial-law era. As Tan Kian-seng notices, the colonial polity may be removed, but the former Chinese-Han supremacy still wields its control over Taiwan. "Mau Pa Chu Sa," the Black Devil's curse for summoning troops from the hell, is actually a phonetic reversion of KMT's anti-communist slogan in Mandarin "Sha Chu Pa Mau."<sup>47</sup> This inverted cursing code is associated with the martial law days. With the "ironic" inversion, Tan intends to counteract the ongoing colonisation of the mind.

In addition, "Mau Pa Chu Sa" represents a re-consideration of ethnic issues in light of multi-ethnicity and human nature. In Tan's view, the Chinese authorities try to absorb Taiwan into the Chinese narrative by claiming that Taiwan is "an inseparable part of China's territory" and that "most Taiwanese people are descendants of Chinese Han settlers." "Mau Pa Chu Sa" functions as a retort and distortion to such Chinese-Han-centric standpoints. Tan believes that non-Han heritages distinguish Taiwanness from Han-centric Chineseness. Hence, by re-articulating Sirayaness, he is able to reinforce Taiwan's multi-ethnicity.

Also noteworthy, similar to other former colonies' sagas, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* unveils a fictional world of magic realism.<sup>48</sup> The battle between Sirayans and the Black Devil Ridge concerns not only conflicts in human domains, but power struggle in the superhuman world, portrayed by the tug of war between benevolent deities, such as brave souls of eight leopards and *alid*, and demons represented by the Black devil and his followers. Also involved are humans with magic power, such as Peh Chin-chu, the *nipus*,<sup>49</sup> and a legendary hero "the flying aborigine." Interwoven with myths, legends and hyperbolic plots, the play exposes absurdities within a colonial context

and translates a decolonising cultural politics, waging a resistance against "lineal reasoning" of colonial logics (Liao 2003: 155–156). By the way, magic realism also fits the hyperbolic style of Taiwan's Kim-kong puppet shows.

### **The Metaphor of Marriage**

Regarding interethnic conflicts and "imagined" solutions to this problem, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* takes a compromising approach. Unlike Tan Lui, who challenges Chinese-Han hegemony explicitly, Tan Kian-seng stresses that he never intends to infringe the rights of the Han people despite his highlighting Siraya. In his opinion, during heated debates over nationalism in the post-martial law era, previously-suppressed interethnic hostility flared and ripped apart solidarity of Taiwan's society. "The ethnic issue is a sensitive topic," he admits, "it's important to attain equality, tolerance and mutual respect in a multiethnic society."

His interethnic standpoint culminates in two interethnic marriages—one of a Sirayan wife and a Han husband, while the other of a Sirayan man and a Han woman. The "crisscrossed" marital ties manifest intersected but "equal exchange" of gender and ethnic positions, translating a type of national integrity co-constituted by entwined but fairly shared power relations. The metaphorical marriage hints at negotiation with Chinese-Han hegemony and a result of mutual compromise. With this arrangement, Tan says, "both Sirayans and Hans are addressed equally. Hopefully it will appease the Han people" (Interview 10 March 2012).

Marriage as a metaphor is frequently used in national narratives to symbolise national consolidation. In national sagas, anti-colonial nationalist battle is often interwoven with romance. The marital relationship implies that the nation is a mega family constituted by many individual familial ties (Sommer 1990: 82–90). In *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, the two interethnic marriages symbolise reconciliation between Han and lowland Austronesian groups, mapping out a new vision of Taiwan as a multiethnic nation. The diagonal "exchanges" of gender and ethnic roles indicate recognition of differences between Han and Austronesian groups, males and females, and their equal share of right and responsibility in nation-building.

## Representation of Sirayan Femininity and Matrifocal Culture

Representation of Siraya's matrifocality distinguishes *Blitzkrieg Siraya* from most national sagas. In many "bourgeois national narratives," women are incorporated into the metaphor of marriage and excluded from nation-building (ibid.: 90–92). In *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, the matrifocally-oriented Sirayan femininity is epitomised in the female protagonist, Bou-hun. The role's detailed portrayal reveals a new horizon of re-envisioning Taiwan, in which Sirayan femininities contribute to the reconstruction of Sirayanness and Taiwanness.

Bou-hun takes initiatives of joining in military action, which is supposedly a male-only territory, and choosing her marital partner. She is strong and outspoken, employing a good command of using knives as a defensive weapon. When men take advantage of her, she fights back undauntedly. In Act Four, when a male rascal harasses her, Bou-hun grabs and twists his arm, nearly breaking it (Tan 2010: 65–67). In Act Six, when a Japanese gangster flirts with her, asking for her name, she replies wittily, "My last name is Lin, first name, Cho Ma (My last name is Your, first name, Great Grandma)"<sup>50</sup> (ibid.: 90). "As a Sirayan woman" Tan said, "Bou-hun's counteraction indicates that her subjecthood is an innate part of her nature" (Interview 10 March 2011). In the final scene, when Bou-hun and her Han husband exchange marital vows, she urges him to observe Sirayan custom and "marry over" to her village, and announces that she will not prepare any dowry. In Han society, a wife's dowry actually hints at her inferior status of being "fetishised."

The imaging of Bou-hun contrasts sharply with her Han counterpart, Tio Nga-eng, who appears meek, fragile and submissive to the Han patriarchy. Highlighting Sirayan matrifocal femininity, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* strikes up a new dialogue with patriarchal Chinese-Han mainstream and leads re-imagination of Taiwan to a new direction.

## **PROBLEMS WITH THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE IN *BLITZKRIEG SIRAYA***

Problems arise when Han-centric viewpoints and discrimination against women still implicitly affects the play.

An example of Han-centric connotation is found in Act Six. The Han woman Tio Nga-eng expresses amazement when she passes by her Sirayan lover, Tong Bou-nia's study and sees many volumes of Han medicine classics. "Though you live in a remote village," she says, "you sound knowledgeable and well-educated. Now I know why. Your family must have close ties with the Han people! I'm surprised to see these books!" Bou-nia replies, "Under Han dominance, Sirayans should persevere and work hard. Han civilisation has a long history. It is worth studying" (Tan 2010: 84). The dialogue is filled with geological and ethnic prejudices. It presumes that people in rural areas are inferior to those living in metropolitan areas. Worse, it assumes that people associated with Chinese Han are more "cultured," and the Sirayan group, represented by Bou-nia, seems to consent with the bias, suggesting submission to Chinese Han supremacy. While Tan tries to appease the Han people, perhaps subconsciously, he surrenders to the dominant Chinese-Han ideology.

In fact, Sirayans have inhabited southern Taiwan for thousands of years. They must have fit quite well with the local environment and established a knowledge reservoir about the flora and fauna of their homeland. Contemporary research also confirms their expertise in herbal medicine and wisdom in other domains (Lim et al. 2013: A21). In this field, Sirayan forebears should not be less knowledgeable than the later-immigrated Han settlers. However, in the play, only the advancement of Han medicine is emphasised, while Sirayan folk medicine is left unmentioned.

Secondly, although female roles are highlighted, implicit discrimination against women permeates through the script. In Act Six, when Tio Nga-eng decides to stay with her Sirayan friends while the Black Devil launches a perishing war, her Han male friend Koan Che-bun tries to dissuade her but fails. Impressed with Tio's determination, Koan sighs and says, "Alas! I'm ashamed, because I'm taught what righteousness is, what friendship is by a woman!" (Tan 2010: 109). In other words, Koan assumes

that women are inferior to men in morality and knowledge and that it is improper to have a woman instruct men. On the surface, it seems natural that Koan makes this remark in a male-centric context two hundred years ago. Nevertheless, the play is produced in modern time and should not reproduce the outdated gender stereotypes. The script writer or producer could have inverted this statement or inserted a criticism on biased gender ideology.

More controversial, though the Siraya female protagonist Bou-hun gets much representation, it is still based on imagination of bipolarised gender roles. Reflecting on the role's construction, Tan says, "She behaves just like a man. She is a fierce fighter and speaks freely of whatever she wants to." Should femininities of a matrifocal society be re-erected according to male behavioural norm? Or should physical strength and frankness be equalised as masculinities?

## **CODA: TOWARD A GLOCAL NATIONAL NARRATIVE**

*Blitzkrieg Siraya* unravels a Siraya-based national narrative and a dialogic space where varied dynamics, such as ethnicity, gender, nationalism, de-nationalisation, localisation and globalisation intersect. Equally significant, *Blitzkrieg Siraya* as a social practice expresses a longing for a Taiwan nation, challenging the Chinese-Han-centric hegemony, and embodies an endeavour to rearticulate Taiwan as a multiethnic nation with solid Austronesian heritages.

With the surge of globalisation, which is often sketched out in the perspective of U.S.-China competitions, some researchers predict that nationalism is waning, and Taiwan will be incorporated into the pan-China circle. However, globalism and nationalism/localism are not absolutely incompatible. Actually, globalism may co-exist and interact with nationalism and localism. As Tan Kian-seng observed, "Globalisation and localisation are like two edges of a sword, two sides of a body." In *Blitzkrieg Siraya*, a Siraya-based discourse is co-constituted by varied global, national and local agents. In light of this, the puppet play as a cultural practice brings forward a glocal horizon.

In reality, localisation endows nationalism with a broader foundation, materialising nationalism in pluralised and detailed local liaison. The Siraya-based national narrative in *Blitzkrieg Siraya* brings forth a new breed of Taiwan identity, expanding and enriching Taiwanness with more ethnic and regional interlinks. On the other hand, it enhances Taiwan's visibility in global forums, helping Taiwan brave rushes of globalisation. As Tan Le-koan emphasised, to remain competitive in the globe, a community must inquire what makes it unique, more salient and more valuable (The Foundation of Folk Arts 2005: 225).

Taiwan's modern history unveils as foreign powers dawned on this island in the 17th century. In the ensuing four hundred years, lowland indigenous groups, particularly the Sirayan people, endured the most profound and extensive impacts of multiple colonisation. To retain a comprehensive Taiwan historiography, it is necessary to locate in lowland Austronesian positions, especially in Siraya's perspectives.

In the meantime, colonisation affected the developments of Taiwanese vernaculars, which used to be stigmatised by the Mandarin-privileged Chinese-Han hegemony and the consequences still linger around. The emergence of *Blitzkrieg Siraya* as a Tai-gi artistic practice shows that diverse ethno-lingual momentums are likely to interconnect with one another and co-effectuate interethnic and inter-communal solidarity in the collective struggles against Chinese-Han domination.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> The term "Blitzkrieg" originates from a strategy invented by the German military during World War I. "Blitzkrieg" refers to a sudden attack that results in a quick victory. The German troops applied the device in World War II when they invaded Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and France (*The New Book of Knowledge*, vol. 20 1979: 272–290). In the article, "blitzkrieg" is referred to as a climactic event in the puppet play: Sirayans and their Han allies take a fast-paced counteraction against an arch-enemy.
- <sup>2</sup> In perspective of multiple cultures, "naming right" and the rendering of proper names of each ethnolinguistic community are respected in this article. The proper names of Tai-gi community are rendered in Peh-oe-ji, which is the Tai-gi Romanisation orthography promoted by Scottish missionaries dispatched by the Presbyterian Church in England in the 19th century. Accordingly, those of Hakka, Austronesian and Mandarin-speaking communities are rendered in their native tongues respectively. If a person insists on a specific rendering of her/his name, it is also respected. "Tai-gi" refers to the native language of the Hoklo people, who make up 70 percent of Taiwan's population. Thus, Tai-gi is also called "Holo." It is the language prevailing in most lowland Austronesian villages. After taking Taiwan in 1945, the KMT authorities re-named Tai-gi as "southern min," which regards Tai-gi as a "dialect of southern Hok-kian Province." Recently Hoklo activists protested against the title "southern min" for its discriminative connotation and an implicit attempt to place Taiwan within the Chinese framework.
- <sup>3</sup> In Taiwan, based on residing locations, Austronesian groups are roughly divided into two categories. Mountain Austronesians are referred to as the groups who mostly reside in inner mountains, with three exceptions: the Pangcah (Amis) and the Puyuma live in the prairies near the east coast, and the Yami reside in Botel Tobago (Ch. Lan-yu). Lowland Austronesians used to live in plains and coastal areas, but many of them were forced to resettle in hilly hinterland.
- <sup>4</sup> Siraya is a lowland Austronesian people who originally lived in Tai-lam. Nowadays Sirayan communities scatter around Tai-lam, Ko-hiong, Pin-tong, Tai-tang and Hoa-lian. Due to multiple colonisations, Sirayan traditional culture collapsed, and their language fell out of use in the mid-19th century. The revitalisation of Siraya started in the 1990s and the activism has been continuing.
- <sup>5</sup> The four incipient performances of *Blitzkrieg Siraya* took place in Tai-lam on 16 and 20 February, 14 May and 17 July in 2010. The fifth and sixth performances were held on 26 September 2010, in Taipei.
- <sup>6</sup> In terms of Taiwan puppetry, Kim-kong means "drastic changes" or "hyperbole." The term emerged in the 1950s when puppet plays underwent enormous transformations. A new breed "Kim-kong" gradually replaced traditional puppet plays. Kim-kong performance features hyperbolic styles, such as overflowing battling scenes, enlarged puppets, exorbitant design of puppets, mixture of Taiwanese and western music, extravagant mis-en-scène, enchanting lightness, sound effects and exploding effects (Goo 2005: 123–126).
- <sup>7</sup> Siraya is divided into two major branches: the Four-Villages and Tevorang. The former consists of four major villages in the plain of western Tai-lam: Sinkan, Soulang, Bakloan and Mattau. The Tevorang

branch spreads in hilly regions in east Tai-lam and Ko-hiong. Some Sirayans moved to the east coast in the 19th century.

- <sup>8</sup> An *inib* is a shaman. The term initially appears in documents of Dutch Formosa era. (Blussé 2006: 71–88).
- <sup>9</sup> In tradition, Sirayans valued physical strength and listed marathon as a major discipline for young males. The legend of the Flying Aborigine originates from Pak-thau-iunn, a Soulang stronghold. A local male *Aphian*, also known as Thiann Thian-u, was said to run faster than a racing horse. *Aphian* and his son were summoned to Beijing, the capital city of Ching Dynasty, by an emperor to demonstrate their racing talent.
- <sup>10</sup> *Alid*, a Sirayan word, refers to a deity or the collective body of ancestral souls.
- <sup>11</sup> In Siraya's matrifocal tradition, women played vital roles in their household and religious activities. Sirayan women were endowed with the rights to inherit familial property, choose marital partners, practice premarital sex and continue living in their native homes in marriage. As for economic production, Sirayan females and males shouldered different but equally important responsibilities: women farmed while their husbands hunted (Shepherd 1995: 15–40).
- <sup>12</sup> In Appadurai's view, globalisation from above is dominated by the global elite class, such as "corporations, major multilateral agencies," policy-makers and "national governments" (2000: 19). Locally-based underprivileged groups have difficulties to get access to resources.
- <sup>13</sup> In 1988, Witan Baser attended the 6th session of the United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP). From 1988 to 1996, Taiwan's indigenous delegates took part in WGIP. After 1997, due to China's boycott, Taiwan's participation in WGIP did not go smoothly. Nevertheless, as Jolan Hsieh observed, "Networking with indigenous peoples from other parts of the world and learning from others' experience is a major benefit" (2006: 47–49).
- <sup>14</sup> Taiwan indigene activist Icyang Parod referred to 1983 as the beginning of Taiwan's Austronesian movement. In the year *Youths of Mountains* (高山青), a magazine issued by aboriginal college students, was founded (2008: 17–18).
- <sup>15</sup> Colonial controls started in the southwest coast of Taiwan and for centuries were confined to plain regions. As a result lowland Austronesian groups endured stronger impacts of colonisation than their "mountain" counterparts. Most lowland vernaculars and cultures were destroyed (Khoo 1996: 10–77). In contrast, lingual-cultures of mountain groups remained relatively intact. Many lowland descendants were assimilated into the mainstream society, which somehow explains why lowland revitalisation arose a decade late.
- <sup>16</sup> Siraya's significant status in lowland Austronesian movement can be attributed to the geological location of its stronghold Tai-lam. In the 17th century Tai-lam was Taiwan's sole entrepôt along the west Pacific maritime course. It is also the destination of Chinese mass immigration, and the capital of three colonial regimes—the Dutch Formosa, Koxinga and the Ching Empire. Due to this, Siraya

became the first Taiwanese people that encountered foreign powers and underwent the most extensive colonisation (Khoo 1996: 6–22). Siraya was also the indigenous people who were most represented in colonial accounts.

<sup>17</sup> In the 1980s the earliest papers on lowland Austronesians were published around 1984. Two articles by Ang Kaim were published in *The Taiwan Folkways* in the year.

<sup>18</sup> The Sinkan dialect is a Romanised orthography based on the Sirayan language of the Sinkan branch. It was invented in the 17th century by Dutch missionaries, who translated the Gospel of Matthew and other Christian books into the Sinkan dialect and taught Sirayans to read and write in their native tongue. After that, Sirayans continued using the orthography and applied it when they signed land contracts with Han settlers. The Sinkan dialect went into demise in the mid-19th century. (Li 2003: 17–19; Ang 2004: 40-1–40-10)

<sup>19</sup> In the Japanese era, ethnic identity was recorded in population records. A lowland Austronesian member will be specified as "sek" (Ch. Shu 熟), which means "cooked" or "civilised."

<sup>20</sup> *Pakasalan* is an annual nocturnal worship dedicated to *alid*.

<sup>21</sup> In 2012 Sirayans filed a suit against Taiwan's central government for failing to grant Siraya a legal ethnic status. The judges of the Administrative Court, however, reached the verdict of "not guilty."

<sup>22</sup> Originally, "mestizo" referred to a person with an American Indian parent and a Spanish parent. In this article, it refers to a person with Austronesian and Viet/southern Chinese-Han descent.

<sup>23</sup> Tan Lui (1939–), a Tai-lam native, lives in Toronto, Canada as a family medicine physician.

<sup>24</sup> Born in 1973 in Ko-hiong, Oo lives in his home city Ko-hiong, and works as a computer engineer.

<sup>25</sup> In history, with the preaching of Christianity by Dutch missionaries in the 17th century and by English (mainly Scottish) missionaries in the late 19th century, many Sirayans were converted to Christianity. The religious belief functions as a marker of Siraya identity. Bok I-li, one of my Sirayan friends, said that Hoklo people living next to her home village called her relatives "Ki-tok-kau-hoan," which means "Christian barbarians." Oo's conversion to Christianity can be regarded as a departure from Chinese-Han religion and a tilt toward Sirayan identity.

<sup>26</sup> Brown estimated that during the Dutch era "the mixed people" consisted of 39 percent to 52 percent of the Taiwan populations. The trend of intermarriage continued in the following reigns of Koxinga and Ching. Many descendants of mixed ancestries changed their identities from Siraya to Han as Han culture became dominant. Brown dubs the phenomenon "short-route identity change" (2006: 134–144).

<sup>27</sup> For instance, many Sirayans call *alid* "Lo-kun" or "Li Lo-kun," which derive from a prominent deity of Han Daoism. The switch may be interpreted as a compromise to Chinese-Han mainstream to ensure the transmission of Sirayan tradition.

<sup>28</sup> Chng Hi-ju, a graduate student in Taiwan studies, takes an interest in Siraya. Her grandparents came from Sirayan villages in west Tai-lam. On 1 October 2011, she revealed that she may have Sirayan lineage and took pride in this, saying that, "Sirayans are just like our neighbours, our relatives."

- <sup>29</sup> Veteran villages accommodated Chinese troops and their families after they moved to Taiwan with the KMT authorities in the postwar era.
- <sup>30</sup> Liao Ping-hui observed the denationalising campaign and questioned their implicitly pro-China motives, pointing out that some media and publishing companies took part in the de-Taiwanising maneuver (2006: 93–103).
- <sup>31</sup> In the story, two Taiwanese women share the first name Chen-mien. The other female and a male have the same first name Chen-an. One Chen-mien and one Chen-an are sisters, while the other pair is sister and brother.
- <sup>32</sup> Tan's family ran a small miscellaneous store in his hometown. His father passed away when he was in junior high school. After graduating from senior high school, he studied on his own.
- <sup>33</sup> As a child, Ong enjoyed watching outdoor stage plays. He has a brother three years younger. At age 10, Ong was orphaned and had to raise his sole sibling. He made a living by performing puppet shows under a melon shelf outside a warehouse-turned hut, where a relative allowed him and his brother to stay. His audience consisted of his classmates and their parents. Ong dropped from school after elementary and did dishes for food stands outside the major temple of his home village. Before his apprenticeship, he travelled with several small troupes, doing chores in exchange for watching free shows and meals.
- <sup>34</sup> In 2007, Ong Ge-beng Super Puppet Theater won Lam-eng Traditional Art Prize. In 2009 it was nominated by Headquarters Administration of Cultural Heritage, the Council for Cultural Affairs of the Executive Yuan as a preservation group of traditional cultural heritage (Chia 2010: *Blitzkrieg Siraya Music CD*).
- <sup>35</sup> In 2006 Government Information Office, the Executive Yuan held a ballot-casting for Taiwan Image. The puppet play got 24.95 percent of the total 780,000 votes, surpassing Mountain Jade and Taipei 101, and won the mandate to represent Taiwan (Tenn 2010: 9–10; Tan Liong-teng 2007: 1).
- <sup>36</sup> The decline of Taiwanese vernaculars is closely related to KMT's Mandarin-privileged language policy. In 1945, the KMT announced Mandarin as the sole official language in public domains. From 1956 to 1987, schools prohibited students from speaking "dialects" on campus. In 1976 the KMT implemented a law that reduced the percentage of TV/radio programs in Taiwanese vernaculars to 20 percent. In 1992 only about 10 percent of Taiwan's TV/radio programs were rendered in Taiwanese vernaculars (Li 1996: 116–118). Extremely popular, though, Tai-gi TV puppet plays were cancelled by all TV channels after 1974 (Tan 2008: 16). In 2006, chief of the Committee of Hakka Affairs Yap Khiuk-lan gave a metaphor of hospitalisation to describe the different deteriorating conditions of Taiwanese vernaculars: "Hoklo is checking in, Hakka, in the emergency ward, while Austronesian tongues are in intensive care units," (Ong 2006).
- <sup>37</sup> The "fighter" genre prevailed in indoor performance in the postwar era (Tan 2007: 134–159).
- <sup>38</sup> Puppetry researcher Chan Eng-gi estimated that the puppet play was introduced to Taiwan around 1850

(The Foundation of Folk Arts 2005: 16). Goo Beng-tek traced the days back to 1835 (2005: 50–53).

<sup>39</sup> In the summer of 2009, Ong watched *the Wanderer*, a musical that Tan wrote the script for. The play mingled Tai-gi poems with music and dance. Ong thought that if Tai-gi poems could go smoothly with pop music and modern dance, so could Tai-gi script match the musical and dramatic registers of puppetry.

<sup>40</sup> Ong is known for his ability to orally demonstrate 28 different emotions and personalities. Still, he confessed the difficulties of producing *Blitzkrieg Siraya*. Toward the end of Act One, Tan initially arranged a long dialogue between the two female protagonists, who are both young and pretty. When two roles with many semblances are staged together, an oral artist has difficulty making a distinction between them.

<sup>41</sup> With the propagation of KMT's Mandarin-privileged policy, Mandarin dominates both public and private domains. Young people stop speaking "dialects"; some even think that Taiwanese vernaculars are inferior to Mandarin.

<sup>42</sup> In this article, "orality" refers to oral tradition or oral literature (Talib 2002: 71–78). The orality of Tai-gi puppetry is embodied in the artistic practice that highlights Tai-gi rhythms, tones, styles, syntax, semantic registers, and the value system shared by Tai-gi native speakers.

<sup>43</sup> The scripts of the Pili series are written in Mandarin and pronounced in Tai-gi. The vocabulary, syntax and semantics of Pili scripts are based on Mandarin. Therefore, the Pili puppet play, despite being rendered in Tai-gi, is actually Mandarin-centred, which has been criticised to impair Tai-gi's orality. Tai-gi researchers contend that to maintain Tai-gi's orality, the language should function as a main agent in the borrowing process, and neither a medium or a transliterated object.

<sup>44</sup> Interference is a topic frequently discussed in reference to language learning and the language of postcolonial literature. Talib thinks that interference occurs "when one language shows an influence on another, or intrudes on its grammar" (2002: 143).

<sup>45</sup> The quotation is based on an email interview with Bok I-li on 17 October 2012.

<sup>46</sup> To-hong Estuary was in the northwestern shores of Tai-lam. It used to be the natural fishing ground and canoeing entry for Sirayans. In the last 400 years, the estuary has been filled with sand and turned into land.

<sup>47</sup> "Sha Chu Pa Mao," which literally means "to kill Chu and root out Mao," refers to two prominent leaders of Chinese Communist Party, Chu Te and Mao Tse-tung.

<sup>48</sup> Magic realism is a literary style and revolutionary social practice used frequently in novels and films produced in countries that were colonies and have declared independent in the 20th century. Through representations of super powers, magic realism exposes violent relations between the colonial regime and the colonised people (Liao 2003: 155).

<sup>49</sup> *Nipus* is a Sirayan word meaning "shaman." It is used in Kapuasuah, a Sirayan stronghold in east Tai-lam.

<sup>50</sup> "Lin Cho Ma," which means "your great grandmother" in Tai-gi, is a swear word used by a woman when she refers to herself or insults her opponents.

## **GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES RENDERED IN TAI-GI/HAKKA ROMANISATION**

### **Tai-gi/Hakka Romanisation**

Ang, Kaim  
Bok, I-li  
Chan, Eng-gi  
Chia, Beng-iu  
Chng, Hi-ju  
Goo, Beng-tek  
Hok-kian  
Iap Chioh-to  
Iunn, Su-bi  
Kapuasuah (a Sirayan term)  
Khoo, Kek-tun  
Kim-kong  
Ko-hiong  
Koan, Che-bun  
Lam-eng  
Li, Heng-chhiong  
Li, Khin-huann  
Li, Siau-hong  
Liau, Sui-beng  
Liau, Tiau-beng  
Lim, Bun-poe  
Lim, Ma-li  
Liok, Tiong-heng  
Liu, Yit-chhong (Hakka)

### **Mandarin Romanisation and Han characters**

Weng, Chia-yin 翁佳音  
Mu, I-li 穆伊莉  
Tseng, Yung-i 曾永義  
Hsieh Ming-yu 謝銘佑  
Chuang, Hsi-ju 莊喜如  
Wu, Ming-te 吳明德  
Fu-chien 福建  
Yeh, Shih-tao 葉石濤  
Yang Shu-mei 楊舒媚  
Chi-pei-shua 吉貝耍  
Hsu, Chi-tun 許極燉  
Chin-kuang 金光  
Kaohsiung 高雄  
Kuan, Chi-wen 關齊文  
Nan-ying 南瀛  
Lu Hseng-chang 呂興昌  
Li, Chin-an 李勤岸  
Li, Hsiao-feng 李筱峰  
Liao, Jui-ming 廖瑞銘  
Liao, Chao-ming 廖朝明  
Lin, Wen-pei 林文珮  
Lin, Ma-li 林媽利  
Lu, Chung-heng 陸中衡  
Liu, I-chang 劉益昌

Lo-kun/Li Lo-kun	Lau-chun/Li Lau-chun 老君/李老君
Moa-tau	Ma-tou 麻豆
Ng, Chun-hiong	Huang, Chun-hsiung 黃俊雄
Ngoo-chiu Toa-jiat-mng	Wu-chou Ta-je-men 五洲大熱門
Ong, Ge-beng	Wang, I-ming 王藝明
Ong, Ka-siong	Wang, Chia-hsiang 王家祥
Ong, Nga-pheng	Wang, Ya-ping 王雅萍
Ong, Tek-ge	Wang, Tse-i 王澤毅
Oo, Tiong-siong	Hu, Chang-sung 胡長松
Pak-thau-iunn	Pei-tou-yang 北頭洋
Peh Chin-chu	Pai-hua-tzu 白話字
Peh-oe-ji	Pai-hua-tzu 白話字
Phoann, Tiau-seng	Pan, Chao-cheng 潘朝成
Pin-tong	Ping-tung 屏東
Si, Cheng-hong	Shih, Cheng-feng 施正鋒
Sian-hoa	Shan-hua 善化
Tan, Kian-seng	Chen, Chien-cheng 陳建成
Tan, Le-koan	Chen, Li-chuan 陳麗娟
Tan, Liong-teng	Chen, Lung-ting 陳龍廷
Tan, Lui	Chen, Lei 陳雷
Ta-pa-ni	Chiao-pa-nien 噍吧嘸
Tai-lam	Tai-nan 台南
Tai-tang	Tai-tung 台東
Tenn, Pang-tin	Cheng, Pang-chen 鄭邦鎮
Thau-sia	Tou-she 頭社
Thiann, Thian-u	Cheng, Tien-yu 程天輿
Tio, Nga-eng	Chao, Ya-ying 趙雅盈
To-hong Estuary	Tao-feng Nei-hai 倒風內海
Tong, Bou-hun	Tung, Mu-yun 同慕雲
Tong, Bou-nia	Tung, Mu-ling 同慕嶺
Yap Khiuk-lan (Hakka)	Yeh Chu-lan 葉菊蘭

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