Differences and Discrimination in the Cultural Policy: An Analysis of Cultural Representation and Intercultural Cohesion in Taiwan

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The social fabric of Taiwan has undergone drastic transformations in the past hundred years. The shift in political legitimacy and power from the Empire of Japan to the Kuo Ming Tang (KMT) government has resulted in the legacy of mono-cultural regimes. Past cultural policies created a cultural hierarchy between the culturally privileged ethnic group namely the mainlanders from China and ethnic minority groups which were the indigenous people and Hakka. This resulted in the creation of cultural barriers and discrimination which have since been deeply naturalized. Multiculturalism as a policy indicator was only introduced by the Taiwanese government in the late 1990s and the government committees for the indigenous people and Hakka were established to promote their traditional cultural expressions.

This paper will first discuss the problems that can arise when ethnic groups are classified within government cultural policy. I will argue that this has created a gap between different ethnic groups and led to the creation of stereotypical views between these groups. These stereotypes have resulted in imagined fixed symbols of each group’s culture where these symbols have also replaced the cultural differences among each group. The second part of the paper will analyze the results of cross-sectoral policies that sought to acknowledge the cultural differences of the indigenous people which were implemented at different levels of government. I will conclude that these policies, instead of promoting intercultural cohesion in Taiwan, have instead led to divisions and ruptures between how the government and indigenous people think cultural representation of indigenous people in Taiwan today should be managed and promoted.

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