

Chapter V Conclusions and Suggestions

A place name is how people refer to a certain place. Just like personal names, it must convey the understanding or expectation of the name givers for the place. Place names contain historical, geographical and linguistic information (Li, 1998). As carriers of a message, place names must be realized in language. So the understanding of language contents of place names can help us to have a better picture of the geographical scene and historical changes of a place.

Taiwan is currently an Han Chinese dominated society. But historically there have been different ethnic groups who have been host of the island during different periods of Taiwan's history. Even though Han Chinese have been the master of this island for quite some time, owing to their Han Chauvinistic attitude, Han Chinese did not pay much attention to other ethnic groups' languages and cultures, especially those aboriginal minorities who for quite some time were only considered "uncivilized ". If there had not been the Dutch and Japanese who temporarily ruled Taiwan and left some accounts and investigations, the history of aboriginal people in the development process especially that of the Pingpu groups, would simply have gone with the wind. Thus, through linguistically studying place names of each ethnic group, the present study hopes to fill in some gaps and view the development history of central Taiwan in a different perspective.

There is no language which is superior to others. Each ethnic group has its unique linguistic and cultural specialties. Hakka people exhibit their living experiences in the delicate categorization of mountain words, while the aboriginals show their fear and respect towards ancestors and nature. In recent years, some places have started to use their old place names once again. For example there is “Gumatou Cultural Park” (牛罵頭文化園區) in the Harbor Art Center (港區藝術中心) of Ching-shui Township (清水鎮), Taichung County, the rice from Feng-yuan (豐原) is named as “Huludun Rice” (葫蘆墩米), the community college of Nan-tun District (南屯區) of Taichung City is named “Li-tou-dian Community College “ (犁頭店社區大學), and the words “Ban-xian Feng-Ching” (半線風情) are written on the school bags of Chang-hwa Senior High School. We suggest that place names should be restored in a proper setting, hoping that through the restoration we can leave a seat for these ethnic groups in the history of development of central Taiwan and, by doing so, attract more people to the study of their cultures and languages so that they can have a chance to enrich our Han culture and broaden our horizons.