Taiwanese Indigenous Contemporary Art: Polyphony and Mipaliw

Guest Editor: Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu

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INTRODUCTION

Polyphony is a musical term referring to multiple melodies, or voices.

"Eight-part-polyphony" is a unique vocal music sung by the Bunun, one of Taiwan's indigenous nations. Recognized by the UNESCO as world cultural heritage, the Bununs' complex harmony celebrates the millet harvest and offers respect to the ancestral spirits. It is sung by several singers facing inwards in a circle, arms interlocked, who separately initiate the different notes with the vowels a, e, i, o and u. The diversity of voices and tones is related to M. M. Bakhtin's theory of polyphony as a metaphor for a literary work with a plurality of narrative voices. In the Bununs' song as in Bakhtin's theory, no single voice is subordinated or submerged. Rather, each individual voice remains distinct and necessary.

Nowadays, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis has made us more aware than ever before of the importance of mutual collaboration among human beings. Yet Taiwanese indigenous culture has long been based upon cooperation in life. For example, the Amis, the largest Taiwanese indigenous nation, uses the word"mipaliw" to describe women's mutual collaboration in farm labor, and even to cope with sexual harassment on the farm. That same exchange of labor reflects and nourishes works in Taiwanese indigenous art and culture, so that one regional art festival took the word "mipaliw" for its title. The collaboration of labor, the diversity of voices - these are also seen in the work of Taiwanese indigenous contemporary artists. Polyphony and mipaliw are central to cultural diversity in art and life.

For this edition the authors' essays address issues such as how do the Taiwanese indigenous artists cope with the sociocultural crisis in contemporary art and life through mutual collaboration? How is the metaphor of polyphony demonstrated by the diversity of voices in art and how art reflects the polyphony.

Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu
Guest Editor

POLYPHONY AND ECOCRITICAL DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY PANGCAH ART: JOURNEYING WITH RAHIC IN THE SPACE OF 50 STEPS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore how contemporary ʻAmis artists engage with settler environmentalism. These artists, who belong to one of Taiwan's sixteen recognized Indigenous groups, form alliances with settler environmentalists while rejecting many of settler environmentalism's basic postulates and positioning of Indigenous people, suggesting kinds of polyphony that might be necessary for meaningful collaboration around environmental issues to form. Building on theoretical discussions of alliance and refusal in Indigenous studies and ethnomusicology, I argue that polyphony, particularly as generated through practices of quotation, dialogue, and address, configures both alliance and refusal as dynamic, as well as generative, communicative features of contemporary art practices in settler colonial contexts. For my work, I rely on a combination of close reading of art works, interviews, and ethnographic description of my collaboration with Rahic Talif (Makota'ay Pangcah) and Hana Kliw (ʻAtolan ʻAmis). Speakers of Pangcah employ direct quotation of environmental sounds to frame the more-than-human world as endowed with both sonic and gestural voices. Contemporary Pangcah artists, such as Rahic Talif, employ this linguistic feature in their works to confront audiences with possibilities for ethical renewal, responding to these voices as those of something other than a mute natural resource. Rahic's work, which is often non-figural, generally refuses to serve his mainly settler audiences with images of dancing Indigenous bodies or other multicultural tropes; rather, in his work traces of voices create a means for audiences to extend new relationships with Indigenous people and places. Yet, quotation pairs with modes of labour along the ocean and other ʻAmis landscapes, demonstrating how the ocean is both the object of subsistence practices and ethical grounding for practices of shared labour.

Both Rahic and Hana employ the gestures and practices of shared labour in their creative practice, reworking them to extend to settler viewers a sense of the environment as having both a different temporality and affective resonance than in settler environmentalism. Finally, as I look at forms of address in their works, I observe how art works may be polyphonous in address, speaking differently to those actively addressed by the work versus those who may be considered indirect addressees. Through attention to these features of their work, I provide a model for thinking about how polyphony creates a complicated pattern of alliance and refusal that engages yet remains critical of settler environmentalism.

INTRODUCTION

'amis / Pangcah practices of bringing infants or other new members into their community often begin with a ritual of name giving. If the person will be named Panay, for example, an elder twists the soon-to-be-named person's earlobe and shouts

Panay kiso! Panay kiso! Panay kiso! Fana' to kiso?
You are Panay! You are Panay! You are Panay! Do you understand?

The ritual causes most infants to cry and adults to wince. It's meant to shock one into listening, but not just to recognize one's name. Rather, listening—tengil—connotes a combination of attention and response, an ability to mind other voices. In this article, I employ this ritual as an allegory for Indigenous cultural production in contemporary Taiwan, focusing on a series of works by Makota'ay Pangcah artist Rahic Talif. Rahic's art practice tweaks the ears of his largely settler audiences. His extensive use of quotation during his creative process provides a model for listening and responsiveness to the environment. In pieces that shift across sonic, gestural, and visual modes, Rahic articulates voices of the ocean as mediated in driftwood and sea plastics, focusing the ocean as a political subject.[1]

Rahic’s work resembles Ranciere’s (2015) notion of dissensus in that it employs aesthetic experience in order to “redistribute the sensed and the sensible.” As they move through his installations, audiences are challenged to rethink their relationship with the ocean, to everyday items such as plastic flip flops and water bottles, and to Indigenous people. However, the artworks never collapse the audience’s position with Rahic’s, nor do they court recognition. Keeping the audience’s relationship to the ocean distinct from that of Indigenous people (and even conflictual), Rahic employs pieces made from sea plastics gathered in the intertidal zone to tweak the ears of his primarily settler audience and ask, “Fana’ to kiso? *Do you get it now?*” The voice that emerges in his work thus resembles what Métis historian Dwayne Donald (2009: 11), writing in the North American context, has called an “artifact” in which divergent histories are “paradoxically antagonistic and conjoined.”

Rahic’s framing of listening as mitengil affords alliances with settler environmentalists while deferring many claims that settler environmentalist movements make about nature and sustainability. His bidding is less about recognition of the ocean as a political subject than it is about our response: how we should mind the ocean.

Fana’ to kiso? Caliwen ko tangila namo, widang![2]

To discuss the ways that Rahic’s art plays with multiple voices in order to change how his audience responds to the environment, I will first give a brief background in which I discuss ways that Rahic’s home country, Taiwan’s East Coast, has figured in settler imaginations of an ecologically sustainable future. Then after a review of relevant literature on the notion of dissensus as it pertains to voice, I will provide an interpretation of pieces from Rahic’s series of works *Journeys in the Space of 50 Steps* from my vantage as a sound installation artist in collaboration with Rahic. Finally, I will draw from his works to suggest how we might rethink polyphony as a feature of contemporary art, particularly in settler colonial societies such as that of Taiwan.

BACKGROUND

Rahic Talif began his career as an artist in his mid-30s after a long sojourn in Taypak (Taipei). Primarily self-trained, like many Pangcah / ʻamis men of his generation, he worked in Taiwan's far ocean fishing fleet for three years at the tender age of 15, an experience he calls "studying in the maritime university." He later worked in the construction and interior design trades before returning to his home on the East Coast. Today he works out of a studio in the Dulan Sugar Factory Artist Village, which is about an hour down the coast from his home community of Makota'ay.

Pangcah / ʻamis are one of the sixteen formally recognized Indigenous Peoples in the country now known as Taiwan. Like these other groups, Pangcah speak an Austronesian language and belong to communities that continue to survive colonial structures and the influx of settler colonists. Although Makota'ay Pangcah had long maintained a variety of trade relationships with other peoples who traveled along the ocean and the Taradaw (Siuguluan River) at whose mouth their community is located, they were not absorbed into a colonial state until the Qing conquest of the Siuguluan River in 1877. Subsequently, Makota'ay has endured the arrival of Japanese police officers and schools in the early 20th century, the Chinese Nationalist Party's assimilationist policies and proscription of Indigenous languages from 1945 until the 1990s, Christian missions beginning in the 1950s, mass labor migration from the 1970s, and tourism oriented development (as well as land speculation) since the 2000s. This multiply layered history often informs Rahic's creative work, in which shadows or fragments of previous and current colonial structures appear as juxtaposed traces. Rahic also draws on Pangcah dance and subsistence activities in his work, but he refuses the label "Indigenous artist." This refusal begins to suggest his response to multiculturalism.

In today's multicultural Taiwan, Pangcah Country has a particular eco-allure for tourists and, increasingly settlers. To advocates of a kind of green consumerism called Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS), the East Coast is Taiwan's last "Pure Land" or "Eden," a place where one can slow down from the pace of Taiwan's urban core and rejuvenate oneself through contact with nature. Visitors from Taipei in particular focus on the ocean for its therapeutic value, longing to empty one's mind by bathing one's eyes in the ocean's heaving bosom. This aestheti-therapeutic relation to the ocean is one that Rahic does not reject outright: he considers his work in the intertidal zone personally healing as he confronted intergenerational trauma; yet *Journeys in the Space of 50 Steps* and other works tend to challenge this settler version of finding freedom and serenity through tourism.

Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples bear a particular burden of representation in today's multicultural Taiwan. Settler spectatorship of Indigenous cultural products not only stages reconciliation between settler and Indigenous people; it also palliates anxieties concerning Taiwan's environmental crises, the result of the "miracle" economies and associated industrial growth during the 1970s and 1980s. Taiwan's process of democratization, in which environmental movements played a large part (Hsiao 1999; Fell 2021), has tended to laminate crises of environmental sustainability onto cultural ones. From this perspective, the monocultural nationalism of the Kuomintang (KMT) dictatorship of the 1950s through the 1980s, which proscribed Indigenous languages and Taiwan's cultural links to Austronesia, has brought about a crisis of cultural sustainability akin to an ecological one, a crisis that can only be remediated through recognition and maintenance of Taiwan's Indigenous languages, which in their diversity provide a means for Taiwan to reimagine—if not rebrand—itself as more than Chinese. Meanwhile this discourse suggests, Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledges will save the ecosystem.

Settler environmentalists have often made common cause with Indigenous anti-nuclear and land rights activists opposing both large scale development projects, such as the illegally constructed Miramar Resort on the coast of Taitung, and extractive industries, such as the Asia Cement open pit gravel mine that occupies Truku land in Hualien.

However, these same environmentalists often denigrate Indigenous people. Through literal or figurative enclosures, they fence off lands and oceans as public domains in need of protection. These moves to enclose the commons largely exclude Indigenous modes of relating to their traditional territories.

Frameworks of sustainability, crisis, or redemption, common in settler approaches to the environment, afford alliances for Indigenous artists; however, they are often incommensurable with Indigenous notions of history and environmental relationships. Precisely because they afford alliances, Rahic does not reject these frameworks more than he bids his audience to rearticulate them. Like other Indigenous artists and musicians, he extends alliances with a wide set of audiences and interlocutors—ancestral presences, features of the environment, Pangcah people, other Indigenous people, settlers, and audiences outside of Taiwan—through choices of language, media, and exhibition contexts (Diamond 2007). At the same time, his alliances contain elements of refusal, often challenging many basic postulates of settler environmentalism. Rather than serving his audiences with images of dancing Indigenous bodies or other multicultural tropes, his works are often large-scale sculptural installations that evoke the intertidal zone. Moreover, Rahic translates his dialogues with the ocean into artworks made from sea plastics and canvases scavenged from a former sugar factory. These materials demand that the audience confront what Dena'Ina musicologist Jessica Bissett Perea (2021) calls the "density of Indigenous experiences," the ways in which colonial and post-industrially derived materials often express Indigenous standpoints while refusing to conform to settler expectations of how Indigenous people should sound (or look).

These materials demonstrate that the multiple voices that inform Rahic's work require not a different ontological stance, but a more careful approach to the colonial histories that configure his voice in relationship both to 'amis / Pangcah country and to his largely settler audience. Indeed, Rahic rejects the claim of the 2020 Taipei Biennial that "You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet." As he is all too aware, we do all live on the same planet, a planet all the more integrated through the dominance of colonial systems that nonetheless obscure this fact.

And yet, we encounter these systems in different ways and with often incommensurable wants. The density of Indigenous experience suggests not a different planet but a more complex one, what historian of science and technology John Law (2002) has called "fractal coherence," an ontological situation in which there is both "more than one but less than many." In my work as an ethnomusicologist and sound installation artist, I am most concerned with how this density—of entanglements and conflicting voices—can be amplified without leveling it to a binary of ontological differences versus the homogenizing impetus of assimilation or inclusion. My ongoing collaboration with Rahic Talif continues to foster this concern.

Readers relatively aligned with what has been called the "ontological turn" in the social sciences and humanities may feel a bit uncomfortable with my insistence that work like Rahic's requires more attention to the heterogeneous, entangled quality of Indigenous practices of knowledge production and worldmaking, rather than a stress on the ontological difference between these practices and the settler world. The ontological turn has often cloaked itself in promises of decolonization. However, as argued by a number of Indigenous and settler scholars working in Indigenous studies, arguments that Indigenous worlds are ontologically different often amplify colonial relations. Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd (2016), for example, argues that the ontological turn has often functioned as a screen for extracting Indigenous knowledges while further marginalizing Indigenous knowledge keepers and scholars. Moreover, a stress on ontological differences has the effect of oversimplifying the historical and ethnographic complexity of Indigenous societies (Anderson 2009, Cepek 2016, Nadasdy 2021). To return to a Pangcah case, Pangcah people relate to the ocean as a site of ancestral presence, a larder, a resource measured and exploited by extractive global fisheries, a way to convert dangerous labor into cash income, and a site of settler colonial governance. Ontological arguments would tend to flatten these heterogenous ways of relating to the ocean, demanding that we select one—usually the one most different from a settler perspective—as "authentic" (cf. Cepek 2016).

In this regard, the ontological turn may ultimately serve to segregate Indigenous knowledge production into categories approved by settler institutions (Anderson 2009, Moreton-Robinson 2004). Finally, as argued by Paul Nadasdy (2021), ontological arguments create a political impasse. If we do live in different worlds, how can we communicate, let alone engage in processes of negotiation necessary for decolonization (cf. Fabian 1983, Huw Price 2003)?[3] In response to these problems, scholars in Indigenous studies have argued for careful exploration of the density of Indigenous experience (Anderson 2009, Bisset-Perea 2021) and a stress on relationality as a mode of knowledge production and interpretation (Moreton-Robinson 2017, Nadasdy 2021, TallBear 2019, Wilson 2008).

In his artistic practice, Rahic translates multiple voices and experiences into a body of relatively abstract works. The dense, polyphonic character of these works require not a gesture to multiple ontologies but a more critical appraisal of how some modes of relating to the ocean—and in Taiwanese society more generally—have been subordinated, attenuated, or disrupted by colonial structures. We might ask, what artistic and critical practices might unsettle these structures? This question leads us to think about the question of dissensus.

MULTIPLE VOICES AND DISSENSUS

When Rahic discussed the ritual of giving someone a name during a conversation at his studio in December 2021, he explained that the faculty of listening, particularly of recognizing that one has been addressed, is also what constitutes voice (nghia), separating it from mere sound (soni). The opposite of tengil, he told me, is not do'eng (deafness) but maapa' (lack of sensibility), an inability to make sense and respond correctly. According to this distinction, we recognize a voice when we connect the sound with dialogue, when we sense someone or something that has registered other voices in its acts of listening and, out of this recognition, responds to or addresses one or more of these other voices.

Rahic further connected these acts of listening that constitute voice with musical and subsistence practices, such as the call and response patterns of traditional ʻamis musics which have voice (ngiha) in spite of their use of vocables which lack semantic content. As he discussed the ritual, I was reminded of a phrase that several elders around ʻatolan employed as they taught me the ʻamis language, cekiwen ko sowal ako, scrape out the meaning of my words as if you are gathering shellfish. Fana' to kiso?

This connection between listening, response, and having voice informs my ongoing collaborations with Rahic and other artists. A new immigrant to Taiwan who grew up as a member of the Euro-descendent settler population in the United States, I am a long-term guest of the ʻatolan ʻamis and Cawi' Pangcah communities. Originally interested in the ways that contemporary Indigenous songwriters employ globally circulating popular music genres in projects of cultural revitalization, I began learning Sowal no ʻamis and from there developed commitments to these communities both on the East Coast and in Taypak (Taipei). I first encountered Rahic's work while learning to dive for shellfish from men of the Lakancing age set (of which I am a member) in ʻatolan, as well as meeting Rahic at events in the Sugar Factory Artists Village. My age mates and I saw Rahic gathering sea plastics along the ocean, singing and drawing in the intertidal zone. At the time, I was working on a project on the influence of far ocean fishing on coastal ʻamis communities. Knowing that Rahic had worked on the boats, I visited him to record some of his stories. Later, as a kind of mipaliw (labor exchange), I helped with documentation and translation work for the *Journey in the Space of 50 Steps* project. In several visits with Rahic to the space of *50 Steps*, the intertidal zone, during 2014-2015 I created with him a sound installation piece in which his dialogues with the ocean, as well as the multiple voices that inform these voices, were looped and layered together. This work with Rahic has continued in more recent collaborative projects, which continue to challenge me to theorize voice in relationship to acts of listening to the ocean.

As I listened with Rahic and others to the ocean, I began to understand polyphony not merely as a set of dialogues among a set of beings whom we recognize as having voices, but to understand two problems connected with voices: (1) the kinds of demands that listening places on us and the stances we take in relationship to these demands; (2) how we bring the internal multiplicity of voices into coherence (or not): to what beings / collectives do we assign voice and how? If, as linguistic anthropologist Nicholas Harkness (2013) has argued, voice is a phono-sonic nexus, what listening practices and semiotic ideologies inform how we distinguish between "voice" as a sensible and aesthetically patterned sound (the phonic), versus mere residue or noise that may nonetheless serve as a diacritic (the sonic)?

This question is political, and not just because ideologies police this nexus, disqualifying certain sounds as voices. Rather, in the internal composition of voice, certain actants come to be understood as responsible for and relatively in control over the voice. Voices, as assemblages of different actants who all produce sound and as a product of listening and interpretive practices, cannot be understood as a unified product of a single subject. Instead, voices require several differently situated actants who amplify or attenuate, receive, translate, or interpret voices, as well as those who produce voice (principals, authors, animators). Which of these actants appear as relatively immediate channels for voice? Which can be said to be responsible for speech or song? Which can only be heard as noise or interference?

These are questions concerning the distribution of agency that we cannot avoid when thinking about voices as internally polyphonous, and yet we often collapse voice onto individuated persons as the voice of a specific or stereotyped social figure.[4] Indeed this notion of voice as indexing a social type undergirds Bakhtin's (1990) discussion of dialogism. But what if the question for us is not how we register social types in language, assembling voices as relatively coherent figures that we laminate with known identities? What if the problem is how voices are produced through practices of animation that exclude some matters from our concern or, should these matters ever enter the agora, only remain matters spoken of, only voiced through those given a warrant to speak on behalf of them?

That said, the question may not be one of which voices count, but which voices catch us up, less about which voices convince than which voices convict. In other words, as I think about polyphony in contemporary art, I am less concerned with identity or inclusion—how we might recognize works as being or having an Indigenous Voice—than ethics; that is, what we do when we sense that the voice has addressed us. Mitengil kiso?

Scholarship on how art may change conditions for recognizing voices and matters of concern often draws upon Ranciere's (2015) notion of dissensus. According to Ranciere, social order is upheld by *consensus*—a common sensibility that determines what can be perceived as meaningful, thinkable, or utterable in a given society. As such, consensus distinguishes between subjects included as having voices in political process versus those who, bereft of voice, require representation or, worse, disregard. Consensus also draws a line between acts that count as communicative and those that make no sense. Consensus is a "distribution of the sensible," or an "established set of possible modes of perception" (Tolia-Kelly 2019: 127). In relationship to the police order maintained by this distribution of the sensible, art acts to shift what counts as voice, changing what gets acknowledged as having social relevance.

According to Ranciere, *dissensus* is not exactly politics—politics and art are separate but mutually resonant domains. Moreover, dissensus is not the existence of disagreement on an issue; it is rather a shift in what can be understood (sensed) as an issue and what statements on this issue count as statements (what makes sense, i.e., is sensible). Dissensus changes the possibilities of perception, argument, voice, and subjectivity, contributing to the possibility of a democratic politics. Art's role in producing dissensus derives from the way that art may serve as "a means of breaking down pre-existing habits of association and categories of classification" (Papastergiadis 2014: 8). Given its focus on how issues become matters of public concern and whose voice registers in public debate, Ranciere's work has been fertile for scholars working in the intersections between art and sustainability (Wildermersch 2018, Barthold and Bloom 2020) as well as those interested in the politics of art.

Dissensus has also informed scholarship with contemporary Indigenous artists. Roland Bleiker and Sally Butler (2016; see also Butler and Bleiker 2017) show how through forms of dissensus Australian Aboriginal artworks destabilize official messages in the contexts of international exhibitions. Geographer Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (2019: 129) extends Ranciere's notion of consensus to curatorial practices, arguing that curators who challenge how settler institutions tend to display Indigenous art create "space for 'other voices' […] and an inclusive practice of display, narration, and indeed self-determined accounts of culture and aesthetic values." Dissensus may also provide a new foundation for collaboration (Strohm 2012) and a way to politicize images of Indigenous people as inherently, yet apolitically, ecological (Hornton 2017). In the Taiwanese context, Lu Pei-yi (2021: 91) describes how artworks associated with resistance to the forced eviction of urban Indigenous communities engaged in dissensus, as the artworks "shed light on underlying issues and make them visible and perceptible."

Although dissensus has energized scholarship on art as a "means by which a new understanding of things or the identity of the community articulates its emergence" (Papastergiadis 2014: 12), Ranciere's framework has been faulted for its rejection of relational art and ethics (Papastergiadis 2014: 18), its distinction between dissensus and confrontation (Gündogu 2017), and its tendency to center a Western notion of a disinterested autonomous subject (Jackson 2016, Papastergiadis 2014). Mark Jackson (2016: 15), for example, shows how Ranciere's notion of dissensus ultimately "risks precluding many voices, forms of life, imaginative possibilities, and attunement practices." Engaging with the work of Anishnaabekwe writer and critical theorist Leanne Betsamosake Simpson, Jackson (2016: 19) suggests that we expand our notion of aesthesis to include attunements that "come from and by the object," forms of commitment or entrusting oneself to the world that artworks might provoke if they pose questions of how we engage in "being together or not being together."

To return to notions of dissensus as leading to recognition and inclusion of formerly excluded voices, inclusion of this sort seems to pose dangers of turning decolonization into a metaphor (Tuck and Wang 2012).

Including “Indigenous voices” or acknowledging “Indigenous issues” often occurs within multicultural frameworks that maintain settler temporal orientations. Indeed, hailing or including Indigenous voices performs a kind of liberal multiculturalism that may never challenge settler arrogation of land and the continued existence of settler colonial polities (cf. Coulthard 2014, Robinson 2020). In this regard, Ranciere’s dissensus suggests a polyphony that extends rather than unravels colonial structures (Milby and Phillips 2017: 12). In response to a kind of inclusion that may organize multiple voices in ways that subsume them into a single narrative or assign them to specific, predetermined slots (“an Indigenous voice”), we may return to the scene in which our ears were tweaked to encourage us to mitengil (to mind the voices to which we listen). The crucial difference here is not inclusion but response: not the encompassment—or, worse, interpellation—of formerly excluded subjects but a kind of listening that might compel settlers to “take responsibility for their position and privilege within settler societies” (Damian Skinner, quoted in Milby and Phillips 2017: 37).[5]

Here, tengil, the notion of listening that undergirds Rahic’s work, models an ethics of polyphony with political import. With its stress on minding and response rather than comprehension, tengil suggests practices of listening that defer to the environment. Meanwhile, tengil holds space for different practices of listening that need not resolve voices and listeners into a single, unified collective. Thus, while the practices of listening and response that Rahic mediates in *The Space of 50 Steps* confront audiences with possibilities for ethical renewal, these practices differ from dissensus in their refusal to serve as a representative of an Indigenous voice. In fact, the voices that Rahic animates in his work often retain a quality of being irreducible to a single figure or subject.

MITENGIL

To talk about how Rahic translates dialogues with the ocean into artworks, we should first consider an interesting feature of Sowal no ʼamis. In order to modify verbs, Sowal no ʼamis employs quotative particles.

For example, one might quote the swishing of hips as someone

sashays down the street
ma-piwpiw sa i lalan

the quickness of someone walking
cikay saanay ko rakat

or the shimmering of tears
seriw han no losa'

These phrases translate a variety of kinesthetic, visual, and sonic motions into a quoted voice, which is then doubled or parodied by the speaker.[6] Thus, we might say that in Sowal no 'amis adverbs do not qualify a verb more than they animate the figure of action by translating some quality of action into a quoted voice: a transmodal sort of animation.

While it's not surprising that animation also means that when we register other voices we incorporate a stance toward these sonic others, we might also consider another point that Teri Silvio (2010, 2019) describes in her work on animation: animation also engages listeners. When listening we collaborate to fill in and give life to these figures even in cases in which we reject the stances that the animator generates through her relative distance from or commentary on the animated figure. This feature of animation in turn lets the figure become an artifact: the distance between the roles of animators who co-animate the voices and the figure produced in / of the voice afford conflictual understandings of the figure. As we co-animate figures by registering their voices together, we also generate a common world and our incommensurable relations to it.

Quotations such as these—as well as the use of quotatives to describe aspect—create a particular texture in narrating and singing voices, a kind of multivocality as described by Katherine Meizel (2020) and Meredith Schweig (2021), in which one's voice is the product of interanimated voices. Not only does the direct quote afford stance; it also suggests that one's voice is never quite one's own and that making it one's own is the product of much coordination by listeners as well as singers.

Moreover, this quality of voice, apparent in ʻamis formal speech and singing practices such as repeated figures moving across speech givers, makes ʻamis people more aware, I think, of the role of listeners in producing meaning, even to the extent that listeners have responsibility to render communicative acts effective. In other words, quotation connects with an ethics as well as an aesthetics of listening. Some of these aesthetics include parody, role playing, and playful projection of oneself as other. ʻamis parodies of different musical styles and languages, for example, are a feature of aesthetics connected to an ethics of exploring different subject positions in song lyrics and dance gestures.

Practices of quotation mean that the voice is multiple, as the voices of others directly inform one's speech or song; moreover, the voice is constituted, in part, by acts of responsive listening. Knowing how to listen and to mind voices is part of what it means to malatamdaw (to become a person). Moreover, quotation provides a template for transmodal practices in which visual or kinaesthetic properties sound in a voice which may later resound in written texts, visual works, or dance. As Rahic engages in such transmodal practices he animates the ocean as a figure that demands our response.

MIPODPOD

In a series of works called *Journeys in the Space of 50 Steps* Rahic Talif works in found plastics, sea glass, metal rods, and ink on scavenged canvas, creating large sculptural installations and collages. The series of works, which refer to the intertidal zone—the space of fifty steps—where ʻamis / Pangcah people gather much of their subsistence, also connotes a sense of loss: Rahic relates that his father once told him that this space is all that remains, all that is left for Pangcah people (Rahic 2019). Moreover, Rahic observes that climate change and indifference threaten the ocean.

Works in *50 Steps* underscore that the ocean gives us a kamalatamdawan, a place to become human (Hatfield 2019). In his process, Rahic engages in a form of everyday, mundane labor along the coastline, gathering (mipodpod).

Although most Pangcah people gather driftwood, shellfish, and edible seaweeds, Rahic gathered orphaned flip flops. As Rahic mipodpod, he also listens, sings, and talks with the ocean. The canvases, with their sketches and texts in Sowal no ʻamis, are traces of these dialogues. Each of the individual works in the series is a canvas imprinted with the stamp of a flip flop's sole, along with a quickly sketched drawing of Rahic's surroundings as he found the flip flop. Less evident to viewers is the role of vocalization and writing in Rahic's practice in these and other works. As Rahic gathers, he also listens, sings, and talks with the ocean. The canvases, with their sketches and texts in Sowal no Pangcah, are traces of this broader creative process in which Rahic listens to the ocean's voice and seeks out the ocean's writing. As Rahic describes his process, his work is a reflection—ʻadingo, which may also mean lens or spirit—of everyday acts of subsistence that have continued even as settler incursions have left not much more than the narrow, intertidal space. Or, says Rahic, "I'm looking for my spirit / reflection (mikilim to ʻadingo ako)."

In a book that accompanies *50 Steps* and in discussions about his process with the author, Rahic (2019) augments this relationship with the ocean. In his preface to the works, for example, Rahic describes the sound of the ocean (soni no riyar) as leading him along a lalan, or path, that provides a livelihood. As he walks along the beach gathering discarded plastics, his footprints and the footprints of the ancestors converge; however, this convergence happens aurally: to find the footprints of the ancestors it does not suffice to look at the landscape. Rather, Rahic listens to the ocean's bidding. Likewise, he asks his audience when viewing the works to engage in a kind of transmodal practice in which they, too, attend to his dialogues with the ocean, mediated by the flip flops—which now mediate his relationship with the audience. In effect, Rahic is asking his audiences imaginatively to listen to the ocean's voice (ngiha') as traced on his canvases and embedded in sea plastics.

Each of the works in *50 Steps* is a dialogue in which Rahic addresses individual orphaned flip flops, which often serve as holding objects for relationships with distant friends, deceased relatives, members of his community, and his self.

Thus in #14 (2013.10.19 / 148.5 K) he asks, "aya: masonol ho kiso, idang / talacowa kiso hakiya? [*you are still floating, friend / where is it that you are going*?]," as a way to interrogate his own process: where is he going, and why? The answer must either come from the flip flop, which affords space for this internal dialogue, or from the ocean, which constitutes the voice of the pieces as a whole. A viewer may either overhear this dialogue between Rahic and the flip flop or feel the question is asked to herself.

As his mode in *50 Steps* is mipodpod, gathering, Rahic's dialogues take the form of, and comment on, subsistence activities. Yet, the ways that his work register the voices of the ocean that one relies upon in these activities tends to upend settler notions of the environment, particularly an aesthetics that seeks to view the ocean as sublime. For example, in works #20 and #21 of the series, Rahic sings and imitates Pi'esusay, a rock that makes a farting sound as the winter gales arrive. He has found a flip flop on a day on which the winter swells and north wind promise that soon the rocks will blossom in delicious seaweed. The rocks here north of ʻatolan remind him of Pi'esusay close to home.

To explain further, there is a rock formation on the coast just north of Makota'ay called Pi'esusay or "farting one." During the winter gales, the Farting Rock will regularly produce a sound like passing gas. To explain, it's useful to know that Sowal no Pangcah distinguishes between loud, trumpeting farts, ʻetut, and quieter, sibilant ones, ʻesus. The rock is admittedly louder than a human ʻesus and so may also be called Ka'esusay—the big or adept farter!

Listening to the Farting Rock is more than a diversion, as the rock's flatulence is highly seasonal. Very rarely farting during the summer or spring seasons, the rock begins to fart regularly during the lifes, the northern gales which in turn presage the new growth and flourishing of edible seaweeds, which people in Makota'ay gather and which feed numerous shellfish and other fish beloved by Pangcah. Listening to Pi'esusay creates a kind of relatedness to the ocean. Likewise, by listening to other features of the coast one may determine whether conditions are good for spearfishing or collecting and also determine the approach of typhoons. Pi'esusay's farting keeps time like an almanac and, when Pi'esusay farts out of season, may also be a warning.

The name for the rock formation, Pi'esusay, iconizes the sonic presence of the ocean by quoting and mimicking the sound of the rock during the winter; it also engages with the rock as a presence that while not exactly having a voice (ngiha) still warrants attention. Mimicking and quoting these kinds of presences in narrative and in song, moreover, is a kind of attunement and exploration to one's relatedness to the ocean. Yet, I want to underscore that this relatedness does not conform to typical binaries found in environmentalist discourses. The relationship one has with the ocean through Pi'esusay is not one of aesthetic contemplation or spiritual relationship to "nature." Pangcah people often say that the ocean is their larder even as they engage the ocean as (the dwelling of) ancestral presences. Taking this seriously might require us to rethink how we divide the world into "interests" and "disinterested" relationships. Listening to the lifes, most Pangcah people are aware that the ocean is powerful; however, they do not tend to emphasize the beauty of the ocean in disinterested terms or in terms of its sublime qualities, largely because they rely on the ocean for subsistence. Listening to Pi'esusay as an ecological clock is a mode of action that creates a distinct voice.

NO ONE GATHERS THE DRIFTWOOD: MIPODPOD AND AN ETHICS OF GRATITUDE

For Rahic, mipodpod also provides occasion to explore an ethical breach that occurs when people reject the ocean's generous gifts, whether of seaweed or of driftwood. Work #094 of the series, "Adihayay a manawnaway a datong," depicts a flip flop amid a tangle of driftwood left along the ocean following a typhoon. Text on the back of the canvas gives the location of the drawing (146K on Rt 11, near Pacifalan) and the following description:

Adihayay a manawnaway a datong / O pafeli'an no awa'a a ma'araw kitanan / hanaw mi'aray ko faloco' ako

There is so much driftwood floating upon the ocean / It is a gift to us from the unseen / Thus I feel gratitude in my heart

During the creation of the piece this gratitude was tinged with regret that the gift had been neglected. As Rahic drew the piece he sang a traditional song for which he improvised the lyrics, “the youth have left the community” and “no one is here to thank the ancestors for the driftwood.” He explained that of course today everyone cooks with gas, so there is no need to collect the driftwood. Besides, government edicts prohibit driftwood collection. The driftwood lies along the ocean as a guilty conscience.

To animate the driftwood (and by extension, the ocean), Rahic sang both in vocables and lyrics, interposing long sequences of ʻolic (improvised, chanted lyrics) and kimad (speech making) with several different kinds of songs, as well as quotations of storm surges and driftwood landing on the beach: Phah! Khoh! Kelkekelekelekele! Use of Sowal no Pangcah rather than Mandarin suggests that he addresses the ocean, ancestral presences, and his community rather than an audience of settler museum goers and collectors. The gallery audience enters as what we might call ratified overhearers to whom Rahic gives a mediated version of this dialogue, left in traces on the canvas.

As he began to make the piece, Rahic chose a modern Pangcah tune usually sung with lyrics that describe ʻAmis people gathering after finishing their daily labours. Singing mostly in vocables, he added the lyrics “after the typhoon, there is so much driftwood.” Later, he shifted from this popular song to *malikoda* ritual dance tunes, coding his dialogue as one with / about ancestral presences. His sung and spoken words formed an improvised poem which elaborated themes of technological change and labour migration that rendered gathering driftwood obsolete:

1. The driftwood was the gift of the ocean, but today everyone has natural gas. Only a few artists gather driftwood to sell it to settlers;

2. Now all the youth have gone to Taypak to work or to Takaw (Kaohsiung) to go on the far ocean fishing boats;

3. When people gather they take without giving thanks; no one regards the ocean with gratitude.

Rahic worked through these themes in ten stanzas, which end in the repeated phrases limela'an (*cherish, take pity on, do not waste*), maan han to (*what can be done?*), and talacowa (*where have [they] gone?*). The poem begins and ends with limela'an stanzas, after alternating stanzas of maan han to and talacowa, the former intensified as maan han to hakiya as the poem continues. Generally, talacowa predominates in the first section of the poem, which addresses labour migration, after which maan han to expresses a stance on the rejected gift of driftwood: one can wish it were otherwise, but sadly, it is so. Because one of the founding myths of the annual annual ilisin ritual relates a disaster brought about through human ingratitude for the ocean's gifts, setting these lyrics on tunes employed in ilisin augments Rahic's concern with reciprocity. The song, directed at the ocean, resounds in a silence left by the lack of driftwood gatherers. Can we hear the ocean reply? How should we respond?

And yet, Rahic's poem is playful and highly intertextual. He riffed on ritual, social, and popular genres, some not even Pangcah. To underscore the political-economic context of (not) gathering driftwood in Pangcah Country today, Rahic inserted quotations from Rukai-Paiwan singer-songwriter Takanaw's "Beloved Driftwood" [親愛的漂流木] a Mandarin language song composed to commemorate the damage caused in August 2009 by Typhoon Morokot, even imitating Takanaw's distinctive vocal timbre as he sang "piaoliu mu, piaoliu mu (*driftwood*)". Critical of Taiwan's national forestry bureau policies, which have led both to deforestation and the prevalence of fatal landslides upland, the song parodies government claims to own all of the driftwood. Rahic's quotation of Takanaw's song interrupts his singing on the beach but also places it within a broader framework of Indigenous responses to national environmental policy. These responses, in turn, open onto a history of environmental degradation registered in age set names in 'atolan, where Rahic maintains his studio. After Morokot, elders looking over the ocean from 'atolan were terrified by a sight never before seen, driftwood covering the beaches and the entire intertidal zone. In commemoration, the age set which came of age in 2010 was given the name Ladatong (*Timber*).

Rahic's quotation interanimates Takanaw, the driftwood, and the ancestors into a larger figure of relationships to the ocean, which Rahic later translates to his drawing of driftwood, stamped flip flop sole, and writing on a canvas scavenged from the Dulan Sugar Factory.

As Rahic addresses the ocean (and alternately his audience) he focuses on how the ocean might continue to be in dialogue with us, but also points out the ways in which our economic system made us reject the ocean's generosity: we no longer stop to gather its gifts; at most we take from the ocean in order to make money. But it is also clear that in *50 Steps* Rahic mediates a kind of responsiveness to the ocean which refuses several postulates of settler environmentalism.

First, from the standpoint of *50 Steps* it is unethical to relate to the ocean as a beautiful and largely indifferent natural feature that requires protection: to do so would be just as unethical as treating the ocean as an exploitable resource. As a Pangcah person, one must gather and express thanks for the ocean's gift.

Second, *50 Steps* does not situate Indigenous traditional knowledges as a salve for Taiwan's environmental—or diplomatic—ills.

Rahic's dialogue with the ocean also conflicts with his own experience as a modern Pangcah person who no longer gathers driftwood, but relies on propane. As such, *50 Steps* unsettles settler expectations of the "ecological Indigenous person" even as it highlights Pangcah modes of interacting with the ocean as a subject with whom we must maintain ethical relatedness.

Finally, *50 Steps* employs the detritus of modern industries (canvases scavenged from derelict sugar factories, sea plastics, construction wastes). In this way, Rahic refuses to situate Indigenous relations with the ocean or Indigenous art outside of modernity. His quotations of farting rocks, sea grasses growing, storm surges, ritual, and popular songs guide his audience to attend to the ocean as a political subject. Yet attention is not the same as inclusion. And this is where I think that Rahic's works give us opportunity to rethink multiculturalism.

CONCLUSION

Rahic's practices of listening and creating in relationship to the ocean employ a traditional mode of subsistence activity and quote from traditional and popular Pangcah / 'amis musics. Yet, the translation of his labor and vocalizing into visual art evades recognition as Indigenous, presenting audiences with rough drawings of landscapes accompanied by a scavenged flip flop which, in *50 Steps* serves as a holding object for relationships with a variety of friends, neighbors, community members, and his self. These relationships, which are mediated by the flip flops, bear traces of the ocean in which they floated before Rahic found them in the intertidal zone. As each flip flop is different and appears in different places along the coastline, we might say that there is no one relationship to the ocean but a diverse network of relationships which Rahic negotiates. Although diverse, each of these relationships is translated from mipodpod, gathering, and points to a mode of listening that I have referred to as *minding the ocean: mitengil to riyar*. His gallery audience, who can only view the traces of his dialogues mediated by flip flops, sea plastics, and canvases, must then engage in a kind of transmodal practice in which draw from these traces to reflect on their own relationship to Pangcah people and to the ocean. Perhaps as they read parts of the dialogues as alternately addressed to the flip flops, to the ocean, and to themselves, they may begin to hear something like the ocean's voice amid the multiple voicings in Rahic's work.

Although I am learning to hear the ocean's voice in my own work with Rahic, I am convinced that this voice, as Rahic mediates it in *50 Steps*, is internally dialogic, composed of the many voicings Rahic registers as he gathers, listens, and draws. Yet the practices of minding the ocean that Rahic models for his audience presents a challenge to conventional notions of polyphony and dissensus. For example, Bakhtin's (1990) notion of the internal dialogism of voice, upon which most of the work on polyphony builds, tends to be speaker centric and relatively agonistic. His description of utterances as temporally oriented toward a future response while struggling against past contexts appeals to a romantic notion of artist as a lone creator but does not do justice to the shared labor and attention of 'amis people as they gather shellfish or spearfish in the intertidal zone.[7]

Bakhtin's image of speakers finding their words refracted in an "atmosphere filled with [...] alien words, value judgments and contexts" (Bakhtin 1990: 277) has inspired many insightful approaches to literature and art, particularly those focused on hidden transcripts (Scott 1990) and struggles within signification. However, his metaphor of a speaker aiming words toward a desired meaning bears a kind of expressive individualism that ultimately precludes a robust notion of relatedness within discourses. In contrast, works like those of Rahic suggest neither an agonistic context of wrestling meaning at the boundaries of discourse nor the location of one specific voice as, say, an Indigenous voice. Rather Rahic's work turns our attention to polyphony as practices of quotation, address, and animation that explore generative possibilities of relatedness.

What are these possibilities? In a sense, Rahic leaves these possibilities open. Colonial structures of extraction and management, of overfishing and conservation, not to mention anthropogenic climate change, have altered the ocean and its creatures in ways that make return to precolonial lifeways an impossibility. Reworking our relationships to each other and to the ocean increases density rather than reduces it. We cannot know exactly what these relationships will afford; however, as argued by Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate anthropologist Kim TallBear (2019: 38), relationality offers a means to bid those of us in the settler population to be "more accountable to Indigenous lifeways." In Rahic's work, practices of animation and address might similarly call his audience to accountability by amplifying modes of relatedness that are usually attenuated by colonial discourses. Yet, his works also suggest a creative openness to forms of relatedness to and through the ocean to each other that we have yet to discover as we walk in the space of *50 steps*.

To return to the question of how Rahic's art might help us redefine the concept of polyphony, we might draw on a less frequently noted distinction in Bakhtin's work, between "heteroglossia in itself," in which different voices coexist but can ignore each other, and "heteroglossia being for itself," which Bakhtin defined as utterances in which "heteroglot languages mutually reveal each other's presence and begin to function for each other as dialogizing backgrounds" (Bakhtin 1990: 414).

In Rahic's work, for example, sea plastics and drawings on canvas mediate dialogues with the ocean in which his own voice, voices of those he remembers while performing the works, the voices of the ocean, and the voices of his audience all come into each other's presence, creating conditions for thinking about which voices emerge from the background and resolve into a figure and which remain muted, entangled features of voices that seem never to resolve. In the process, some of the work of minding a voice may itself become available for critical reflection.

Although voice often serves as a shorthand for political subjectivity, Rahic challenges the supposition that the ocean might be subsumed as an individual figure; his approach to what it means to articulate an Indigenous voice might follow from this challenge. Dissensus, recognizing the voices of the ocean as those of a political subject, will not lead to decolonization if we fail to listen to these voices outside of a kind of cultural narcissism that desires ITEK to redeem us from an impending environmental collapse or Indigenous people to provide a trace to a hopeful future in the context of our present international disappointments. With that observation, we are back to questions of how the sounds of driftwood, farting rocks, and winter gales are registered as voices, how we *mind them*. In other words, the question of dissensus is not just one of what / who is recognized as a subject, but a broader ethical problem of how we respond, something often elided by notions of recognition in multicultural settings. How we mind those subjects, like the ocean, is more than a question of inclusion, which is one reason why, I suspect, that Rahic refuses the label Indigenous Artist even as he wishes to twist his audience's ears and rename them.

O lafang kamo! O lafang kamo! O lafang kamo! Fana' to kiso?[8]
Hatira aca ko sowal no mako. Iraw![9]

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NOTES

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[2] Translated into English roughly, "Do you understand? Lend me your ears, friend!"

[3] It is beyond the scope of this essay to provide an overview of arguments concerning the ontological turn in Indigenous studies, anthropology, and sound studies. Readers who wish to become more familiar with these arguments may wish to read Cattelino and Simpson 2022, Todd 2016, Nadasdy 2021, or Kohn 2015.

[4] Nina Sun Eidsheim (2019) calls this tendency to try to answer who is this voice "asking the acousmatic question."

[5] To those skeptical of this position, I can only respond that in a democratic society like Taiwan in which settlers remain the majority population, decolonization would seem to require the settler population take such responsibility and transform their mode of relationships with each other, Indigenous people, non-humans, and the land / ocean. Otherwise, how will a decolonial politics achieve any traction? As argued by Nadasdy (2021: 366) in his discussion of multiple ontologies, "If glaciologists inhabit the same world as sentient glaciers, then there is some possibility—however remote—that they might one day come to take that fact seriously enough for it to inform their actions. The task is to convince them that they should." Informed by Ranciere and following Rahic's art practice, I see this task of convincing to be one of the critical possibilities afforded by art.

[6] I am relying on the description of these usages from Hatfield (2022), which discusses the soundscapes of the Cepo' Pangcah communities.

[7] cf. Futuru Tsai's (2020, 2022) discussion of how groups of men spearfish somewhat alone but attuned to each other and to the ocean in which they hunt.

[8] You are a guest! You are a guest! You are a guest! Do you understand?

[9] This phrase is the standard way to end formal speeches in Sowal no 'amis. Roughly translated, it means, "This is all I have to say today. Thank You."