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River Protection Co-management in Pratan and Mqeleqi

9.1 External participation and support for local scenarios of river protection

9.1.1 Support from government: trend or paradigm shift?

Conservation areas or national property lands in Taiwan, including forest, river and coastal areas, suffered tensions as a result of the rules and restrictions relating to local ideas and practices. As many studies have pointed out, this is a ‘classical paradigm of natural resource management and/or conservation characterized by the use of scientific knowledge under the strong influence of the national government’ (Lu, 2004:1; Huang, Y.W.). In the Taroko area, tensions between the state and the local population have a long history and the complex relationship began, at least, in the Japanese colonial time when laws and regulations had no respect or regard for local values. Protests and claims by indigenous locals about the rights to land, natural resources are increasing and legal procedures are becoming more frequent. There are signs that the authorities are increasingly listening to and taking care of indigenous issues. However, scholars who have closely and continuously observed these tensions have found a lack of legal structure to deal with local concerns. In addition, government policies tend to be blind to indigenous issues and individual government departments pay little attention to indigenous affairs. My own experience of the situation relating to the Taroko National Park is that the attitude of the National Park headquarters changed frequently. While the prevailing atmosphere among staff is that indigenous affairs were extra work, a burden and an annoyance, getting in the way of their regular conservation tasks, there are many officers who do come up with ideas and actions to help indigenous locals. The locals’ attitudes to the various Chairs of the National Park headquarters were usually along the lines of ‘Mr. Shu is a good drinker, he drinks a lot and goes easy on us and he has actually done a lot for us indigenous people.’ Or, ‘Mrs. Huang is a student of Mr. Shu, so is a good drinker and follows the custom of keeping good relations with us!’ We found the headquarters tried to ease the many tensions with locals using friendships or fictive brother-and-sister-ship, but this approach is something of a double-edged sword. The closer relationships are, the more demanding they
can be. My observations are that it is difficult to be a civil servant in these government departments. The pattern in recent years certainly appears to be that central government nominate a Chair to run the headquarters for a short time until the locals figure out what kind of character he or she has and use this to make further claims. This is usually the moment when a new Chair is appointed. In fact, there are no clear guidelines or procedures to support the National Park headquarters in the business of co-management, so chairs or senior officers often find creative ways to manipulate governmental budgets in order to meet their promises to locals.

In my opinion, establishing legal constructions should be the priority in terms of assisting co-management. Take the 2009 proposal to amend the National Park Law. These changes would strengthen restrictions and rules relating to the National Park regime and also detail plans to establish more conservation areas on land belonging to indigenous peoples. The 2009 amendment proposal included vague ideas to establish a Consulting Council on Co-management, a forum for both locals and the National Park. However, it remains at the discretion of the Chair of the headquarters whether this council will actually be set up and such a body has little authority to devolve decision-making powers and management rights to locals. Previous versions of this toothless forum were powerless to make decisions based on the participation of locals and to enforce the implementation of any sort of co-management. One article in the proposal to amend the National Park Law states that the National Park headquarters should promote the co-management on the condition that the law establishing autonomy for indigenous people is passed and implemented. Critics see this condition as a strategy for the National Parks to avoid the burden of establishing laws and implementing procedures. In fact, it is impossible to pass an autonomy law for indigenous people because the ruling Kuomintang (Nationalist) party has little desire to promote indigenous affairs and welfare. It appears that they use these conditions and articles to prevent indigenous legislators from hijacking the proposal and the reality is that the National Park headquarters promotes the strengthening of a top-down conservation policy and the extension of their regime.

There appears to be a trend not just in Taiwan, but also internationally (Bro-sius et al. 2003; Persoon et al. 2006) for conservation officers to be less tolerant of indigenous issues. In the following section, I will illustrate the tensions between the pros and cons of more conservation for the indigenous locals. One day, I attended a meeting hosted by the Taroko National Park to assess a report on designing a network of cycle paths inside and around the park. Someone at the meeting mentioned the need for a participatory design process. This was met with an angry outburst from the Chair of the National Park headquarters who said that the ‘Council of Co-management was of no use at all because the indigenous representatives just wanted to grab what they wanted and did not care about others. That's the reason why I would stop the Council.’ Through her anger, I could see that she was fed up with the dysfunctional council and did not want to become embroiled with it again (see also a discussion of this council by
Chen, S.H. 2003). She was an official who helped manipulate the system to find ways to fund local river protection co-management projects; she did this using her own methods and without the help of the Co-management Council. Below, I will illustrate such a case in Pratan.

9.1.2 Co-management of river protection in Pratan Village

In 2006, the then Chair of the headquarters provided considerable funds to support Pratan community’s river protection project (Yu, Wan-li 2004), which was outside the national park regime. The headquarters also helped with training indigenous locals to run ecotourism businesses based on river protection.

In addition to expensive infrastructure construction, the headquarters also sponsored a survey to monitor the river ecology after the project had been functioning for a while (Yang, Yuen-Po 2005; Chen, Zhen-wen 2004). However, on discovering that Pratan was ‘outside’ the national park regime, no further support came from the headquarters.

In fact, the Pratan community’s river protection project survived without the headquarters’ help. Pratan village fell partially under the remit of the park regime, but also came under the remit of the ambitious township and county offices that assisted in a number of basic law procedures. Pratan locals also had access to other competitive government agencies who were hoping to rack up more administrative accomplishments. For example, the Labor Council in Central Government financed a basic monthly salary for local people patrolling the river for a period of up to three years. The Institute of Fisheries funded preliminary research on river ecology and introduced 3000 young Taiwan Shoveljaw carp (Onychostoma barbatulum) into the Pratan River in order to increase the group of native species. Consequently, Pratan village became a star community that received a great deal of both internal and external support. The money provided by the Council of Labor was sufficient to sustain twelve locals with a stable income. This went a long way to ease the tensions from some locals who were looking for something substantial in return for the services they had devoted to the nature.

A number of villagers in the Pratan community who initially resisted river protection changed their attitudes and cooperated with the protection agenda having found work funded by the Labor Council. There was apparent competition among local and central authorities to have their rulings on the locals, especially in relation to ecotourism, made a priority on the agenda of governmental projects. Pratan falls mainly outside of the boundary of the Taroko National Park, so the Township and the County were eager to establish co-management with the locals, especially because the main leader of the Pratan community was an active politician with good connections and access to governmental resources and political economy. In Pratan, then, we see locals starting to implement their ideas on a more voluntary basis and by gathering support from within their community. This is in contrast to, for example, Skadang that, as we have seen, received much more external support and incentives. However, this meant there was less cohesiveness within the community. Tensions between hunters and gatherers in
Skadang who insisted on accessing the river resources were eased with salaries provided from outside authorities. However, internal tensions persisted in the form of electoral competition at different levels among political parties or the appropriation of funding or profits. Before providing further detail about the ‘contingencies’ that haunt these villages, I will examine the double-edged sword that is governmental support.

9.1.3 The double-edged sword of governmental support

Support from different levels of government was always a double-edged sword for communities who became too dependent on it. For example, the salaries for the patrollers became a burden for local leaders who had initially established the patrols on a voluntary basis. Indeed, the salary issue became something of a conflict. Those local people who had been against river protection at the start demanded that hunters and gatherers be paid for patrolling in order to compensate for their loss of rights to access river resources. This fuelled a complex struggle inside the community. Many local people felt frustrated by such apparent selfishness and worried that if the government stopped paying salaries there would no longer be any will to carry out patrols voluntarily. In addition, the community appeared to be divided in regard to the introduction of young fish into the river. There were locals who disapproved of artificial methods to sustain the river’s ecology and biodiversity. There were others who believed that the introduction of fish had more to do with attracting tourists than river protection.

Pratan had received government support in terms of infrastructure, salaries and bio-resources. The outcome of this support was a community that became famous nationally and attracted many tourists to see places that had once been unknown and isolated. As more tourists came to the village, locals became increasingly inspired to act and prepare for a better future in terms of their income, self-esteem and cultural identity. Some locals remodeled their houses, transforming them into hostels or Bed-and-Breakfast accommodation for tourists. Others established shops or food stands to make money from the visitors. Local leaders, meanwhile, were busy with the question of whether they could take entrance or other fees from tourists, as the Danayiku people had done in their area. After consulting many experts, the answer appeared to be that it was not possible to charge entrance fees. It should also be noted, however, that before the fish returned and attracted the tourists, there had been debates about the legitimacy of closing the river. In the next section, I will outline the legal arguments put forward by both the authorities and some locals for closing the river in order to bring the fish back. By examining the laws used for closing or protecting the river, we find yet another double-edged sword.
9.2 **Legal support for generating income for locals**

For the government authorities and officers concerned, co-management of river protection was such a new idea that it required a paradigm shift in terms of administration. It required designing a structure of devolved power and a division of labor for the management of natural resources. Many officers and public servants were quite ambitious and willing to assist the indigenous people with implementing their visions of co-management that, ultimately, they hoped would also support the local economy.

Fortunately, there were a number of existing laws that could be used to support various scenarios of river protection. This required extending the interpretations of some of the sections or articles of laws that were stipulated many decades ago under authoritarian regimes, when ideas of co-management, devolution and empowering local were impossible to imagine.

Two laws in particular were extensively interpreted by practitioners of river protection. The most commonly used law was the Fishery Act. According to the Fishery Act, ‘governments in charge of fishery resources and the management of fishery industry structures have the rights to arrange fishery zones, restrictive periods or bans’. This article is a strong argument for both the locals and authorities to close a river in order to revive its ecology. Bolstered by this legal support, authorities were eager to help the locals close the rivers for a period of time and wait for the fish to come back. During the years 2004 to 2005 county government, backed up by the Fishery Act, supported the closure of many rivers that had some sort of ‘co-management’ with locals. The county government and the mayor, Mr. Sheh, invited stakeholders from various contexts to attend ‘Closing the River’ ceremonies. In Pratan, for example, stakeholders including the Shoulin Township office, the Taroko National Park headquarters, Agriculture Water Management Association (花蓮縣農田水利處), Institute of Water Resource (花蓮縣水產培育所), the local police and some local NGOs were invited (Yu, Wan-li, 2004). In fact, these occasions often became celebrations and often there were announcements of initiatives that would bring together the locals, the government and stakeholders to launch a vision that indigenous people could use to form ideas and practices of ‘co-management’. In particular, these occasions provided the locals with opportunities to negotiate with stakeholders for more support and solutions to certain issues.

I will now describe in more detail the failures of the different stakeholders to co-operate before going on to raise an important issue regarding the interpretation of certain laws relating to river protection. As I have pointed out, river protection was always intended, in the first instance, as a strategy by both locals and concerned authorities to return fish to the rivers as a way of bringing in tourists and generating income for the communities. In the short term, this required legal support for the locals. With regard to the issue of taking money from tourists in the form of entrance fees, the chief of the township office said she would discuss the matter with experts in the county government in the hope of finding a legal basis for this practice. But her hope proved to be in vain as there was no
direct legal support for private individuals to collect money from tourists coming to visit public land. This would be condemned as illegal or robbery and, in fact, there had been complaints from tourists in other communities who were charged illegitimate entrance fees, for example, in Smagus. The local township authorized the Danayiku community association to collect entrance fees from visitors to their village. But the debate continued about whether the local township had the right to give a license to certain local private NGOs to collect money from visitors on public land belonging, for the most part, to central government institutions like the Bureau of Forestry or the Bureau of Rivers, or in some cases to the county government. It has been argued that the authorities were lenient on Danayiku community and the township because they wanted to help. Only a handful of scholars have pointed out this double standard and we can say that Danayiku was contingently lucky in terms of avoiding confrontations with visitors or the authorities when collecting entrance fees. Danayiku was lucky because many other communities experienced problems and challenges when they started to collect any sort of fees. The most famous case relates to the Smagus tribe and occurred in 2009 when the area was already popular with tourists. The Smagus started to collect entrance fees from visitors and saying that the money would be used to fund garbage cleaning services. The arrangement was that, if you booked an overnight stay in Smagus, then the entrance fee to the Smagus Park was waived. The bottom line was that the Smagus people believed they had a right to be paid for their services in terms of cleaning and maintaining the park, and in terms of compensation for tourists trespassing on private indigenous reservation lands. On the face of it, this seemed reasonable and many visitors agreed to pay, but this action was soon challenged by different levels of government who wanted to stop the ‘illegal’ taking of entrance fees. The major argument they used was that the forest lands in Smagus Park were state owned property and the right to pass through reservation lands should be protected. Some agents of the government said, ‘You cannot just close the road and collect money from people passing by the entrance, that’s robbery!’ Consequently, the Smagus stopped collecting fees without any support or license from the authorities. The chief of Shoulin Township realized that her township and the Pratan locals would face many challenges from higher authorities, so she said she would try to obtain the license through the township council who had the right to rule on township territory. Her plan was to either help the locals to collect fees directly, or she would empower her township office to collect the entrance fee and redistribute a portion of the revenue to the locals as payment for their river protection services. This had been the case in north Taiwan where an Atayal tribe carrying out river protection had received money collected by the township office (see Yen and Kuan). However, a number of locals worried that the Chief of the Township would just take the money and use it to finance her rule and campaign for re-election. At the same time, even if the township took the entrance fee, they could not be sure that another level of government would not challenge this. So this scenario was seen as high risk by many locals who feared that their efforts would result in frustration and disappointment.
The Tourism Promotion Act (觀光發展促進條例) that had been enacted in 1971 was seen as another possible source of legal support for locals collecting entrance fees. This act has only recently been interpreted as having certain sections and articles that can implement special zoning, i.e. that visitors or tourists can only enter certain zones if they are accompanied by special tour guides. The term ‘special tour guide’ can be interpreted as referring to locals with knowledge of their cultures, ecology and landscapes. The discovery and re-interpretation of this article of the old law provides one solution to the lack of legal support for collecting money. However, to achieve this goal, the government and the locals must set up a Natural Human Ecological Landscape Zone (自然人文生態景觀區). This is supported by article 1, section 2, rule 5 of the Promotion of Tourism Act, which says:

Governments concerned can set up this zone when the places in question are full of special natural landscapes that would be hard to recover once lost. These places could be habitats for natural flora and fauna in indigenous reservation lands, mountain areas with limited access, wildlife conservation areas, water resources conservations areas, natural reservation areas, historical reservation areas inside national parks, special landscape areas or ecological conservation areas and so on (Lin, Hung-Kuei 2005).

9.2.1 Co-management of river protection in the Mqeleqi community

The aforementioned law inspired river protection practitioners to establish a zone to include both indigenous reservation lands and also national lands. The zone featured forest, river and riparian lands. Crucially, the law supported the locals in terms of having the right to ask money from tourists directly. This law certainly seemed to be a solution. Based on this interpretation, the Shoulin Township office felt renewed enthusiasm and sought support from other governmental authorities, and local practitioners were encouraged to seek opportunities to promote the Natural Human Ecological Landscape Zone. Pratan and Mqeleqi village were both eager to be promoted as the site for this zone, but it was Mqeleqi that was chosen as the first candidate. The people of Pratan felt frustrated because they had devoted a great deal of energy but gained nothing. There are many reasons why Pratan community was not chosen, but the official reason given was that Pratan was partly inside the Taroko National Park, which was a stakeholder that would be in competition with the ruling authorities. Adding another stakeholder to the mix would complicate the process of setting up a special zone because the county government and the township offices would feel under pressure to bring the National Park under their rule. The reality of the decision, however, was that local politicians had already immersed themselves inside the management structure of the Mqlegi Association, which was a local NGO.

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39 Section 19 of the 1st article.
This plan to make Mqlegi a special zone was approved by the county mayor and the township chief. Both county and township budgets were provided to fund a high profile academic to draft the zoning plan and to start negotiations with the relevant authorities, including the Bureau of Forestry. The fact that the clerk in charge of this case in the county branch of the Bureau of Forestry was a postgraduate student of the professor in charge of the draft seemed like a good sign that the process would go without a hitch.

However, it took almost four years of negotiations with the Bureau of Forestry to reach the point where the special zoning plan was rejected by the Bureau of Forestry. Among the answers given for the failure of the plan was the fact that the term ‘authority concerned’ in the Tourism Promotion Act was vague. This meant that the Bureau of Forestry could interpret this as meaning that the Bureau of Forestry and the Department of Transportation should be in charge of tourism and were the authorities referred to in the Tourism Promotion Act. When the Bureau of Forestry discovered that the zoning plan was designed to include state forest lands that were under their administration, they were concerned that the local county and township governments would encroach onto state lands that had already been set aside as conservation or tourism areas that were run by the Bureau of Forestry. From the local government’s perspective they were planning only inside the Mqeleqi administrative village, where they believed that they had decision-making powers even though the village belonged to the Bureau of Forestry and the county. Because there was a great deal of competition about the ruling, responsibilities and profits of certain areas, a sense of department-centralism developed within government and penetrated intergovernmental communications. The zoning plan that had been inspired and encouraged by so many central and local government officials was finally rejected at the end of 2009. Understandably, the decision aroused considerable anger and frustration among locals. Consequently, we can say that, to date, the law has been unable to provide a solution to meet the complicated and embedded needs of different stakeholders and, in particular, those at different levels of government.

The vision of building a synergy between ecology, economy and cultural identity through river protection and total social engineering has been frustrated, but the patrolling along the river continues in many places, despite the lack of external support and the failure of zoning. What has frustrated the locals most is the number of invisible or unexpected stakeholders who have apparently brought many troubles to the river protection scheme.

Based on the Fishery Law, the authorities can close a river to form a protection zone; however, there are no clear articles ruling that people cannot play or swim in the rivers. This troubles the practitioners very much. The Fishery Law also supports the authorities re-opening rivers for fishery activities when the fish stocks are sufficient. Moreover, the government can charge the fishers a tariff for using the river (Lu D. J. 2004, 2008). This money could only be collected by the government and there was no clear law or methods of implementation to support the transfer of money directly to the locals who were providing the services
to the environment or to compensate them for the damage caused by mining or industrial pollution. Consequently, there was a sense of environmental injustice. Environmental injustice was a common experience and river protection practitioners felt frustrated to find that what should have been a simple action to prevent damage became so difficult. Indeed, environmental injustice occurred on a daily basis. Pratan, famous for its gorge and creek landscape, was overrun with luxury four-wheel drives from all over Taiwan. Many outsiders claimed that it was public land, so they had the right to get close to the river and they ignored the notices saying that the river was part of a protection project. Ironically, more and more tourists arrived in the area precisely because of the famous river protection project. These small communities became so overcrowded at times that many locals joked that there were more tourists than there were fish or stones in the river. The question of capacity had been addressed in the zoning plan but this made no difference to the situation at all. The burden was always on the locals’ shoulders but the profits were always out of local reach. The worst-case scenario appeared to be coming true – that the river protection project was actually causing an ecological crisis.

One final contingency is the problem caused by the Hualien County Agriculture Water Management Association (花蓮縣農田水利處) who had a representative at the aforementioned opening ceremony of the river protection project in Pratan. On the day of the opening ceremony, the leaders of Pratan community had the opportunity to talk to the representative of the Agriculture Water Management Association. They believed that the association was one of the most crucial stakeholders in terms of the river and the management of dams, canals and artificial water channels diverting water from the river for use on a vast area of agricultural land. In fact, the Agriculture Water Management Association had evolved as a common property resources management device (largely among Han farmers) since the Japanese time when the colonial government supported farmers’ claims that the water in the river was their common property without consensus from the indigenous communities who lived on the land where water came from. The practitioners of river protection in Pratan were very worried about the Agriculture Water Management Association making decisions, such as opening a sluice to direct water to agricultural lands, which would result in the river drying up or the fish being killed. The opening ceremony was seen as a crucial opportunity to express these concerns. However, the meeting apparently had little effect, as in 2006, after the locals had successfully returned fish to the river; a drought meant that farmers demanded water from the river to sustain their agriculture. The Agriculture Water Management Association diverted all the water into artificial channels leading to farm lands and, consequently, the river downstream in Pratan dried up and many fish died. The frustrated locals who had struggled so hard to build up their livelihoods felt that they had little choice other than to start poaching again. Many argued that they would rather ‘live on the fish than let the fish die because of the failures of governments’. Once again we see a tragedy of the commons.
9.3 Governance through co-management or autonomy?

As a result of the difficulties I have described, the locals found that it was a risk to rely on the government, and the few successful cases in Taiwan were those where indigenous people had tried to remain independent and not take support from outside. Simply put, the government had very different ideas about purposes, time limits, management terms and administrative limits than the locals. Independence and self-empowerment were ways to manage natural resources, although it was impossible to be completely isolated from outside interference. The cases in Danyiku and Smagus have shown that there is ‘geopolitical resistance to colonization’ (Hipwell 2007:876). Research shows that Danyiku and Smagus succeeded in keeping out governmental interference and that self-management was contingent on the authority’s willingness to keep one eye closed and another open. The contingency in these successful communities did not exist in the Taroko scenario where natural resource governance was embedded in stronger regimes. The people of Taroko could not just close an area off or isolate themselves from external interference. If we see governance as the complex ways that individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common concerns (Borrini-Feyerabend et al.; Agrawal 2005; Sato 2000), then co-management is a good way for communities and the relevant authorities to manage natural resources successfully, meeting the needs of both sides. However, as we have seen, many of these co-management projects failed to reach the standard Borrini-Feyerabend et al (2000) describe as ‘a situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources’.

But there is no question of a ‘fair share’, when the National Park just cancelled the co-management project without discussion. Furthermore, the township, the county and the Bureau of Forestry had different ideas about their roles. The local communities were determined to achieve their goal of ‘autonomy’ either through ‘sovereignty’ or through the management of natural resources. Co-management would be a way to avoid the serious problems surrounding ownership and access rights. Co-management of natural resources would also bypass the fact that property requires clear cut boundaries and the various types of property categories need clear definition in order to enforce duties and rights. Co-management of natural resources also has the purpose of bringing tourists to the area to come and see the fish and, hopefully, it will make some money without having to get involved in defining properties. Even though the river ecology was not actually a priority for local people, the strategy to bring back the fish was seen as a way of improving lives and achieving a vision of combining ecology, culture and livelihoods. My research demonstrates the existence of a contingent ecology in the realm of ambiguous stakeholders with ambiguous management strategies and some vague categories of properties. The locals and a number of indigenous intellectuals critical of government interference had ideas about sovereignty and autonomy mixed up with many international, national and regional ideas. This
inspired the locals to think of alternative ways to make a living and to bring back self-esteem.

9.4 Conclusion: uncertain and contingent futures

Natural resource management (NRM) is indeed a political issue. Through the cases in Taroko outlined here, we see that ‘governance’ of natural resources is embedded in a nexus of conceptions and practices. In the three cases I have discussed, we find communities without strong reciprocities and solidarities at a river or watershed level. In particular, these communities are deprived of positive reciprocal relations with the river where ‘colonialists had dismantled communal property regimes and institutions as a prelude to establishing colonial economies’ (Gadgil and Guha 1992). A total social engineering perspective is vulnerable to difficulties because of the heterogeneity that comes from a community that is hybrid in terms of character and social structure. Different community components with different local contexts bring about different visions and ideas in terms of practice. Through these cases, we see that indigenous locals use moral and emotional reasoning to regain a sense of the participation in the governance of the environment. Co-management is way of including governmental resources to help bring about a synergy of livelihoods, nature and culture. The research shows that legal support is limited. Nonetheless, the state laws support the state taking indigenous private property to build public infrastructure. Indigenous property has actually been recognized to a very limited extent since the days of Japanese rule; however, many collectively owned lands that now belong to the Bureau of Forestry and the National Park headquarters were seen as terra nullius. The Tourism Promotion Act shows some promise in terms of co-management, but the government is not so willing to offer up the benefits or duties to the locals. Whether the Tourism Promotion Act can deliver a promising future in terms of the environment and the indigenous people remains to be seen and there is a tendency in conservation arenas to advocate stricter rules in relation to national lands. Little wonder, then, that many scholars think that the new articles concerning the indigenous peoples are only basic directions of policy but not basic rights at all.

Through the cases outlined in this chapter, I have found that there may be more chance of success in terms of implementation if the design of co-management is well thought through before the process even starts. This would lead to a better division of labor among stakeholders.

The cases also illustrate how important property regimes are to the implementations of co-management. Many scholars found that successful co-management must be based on a clear definition of property, such as that in the successful case of Kakadu National Park in Australia where the indigenous peoples were granted land rights and sponsorship of co-management. Berkes mentions that legal recognition of communal resource-use rights, as in Japanese coastal fisheries, is key to the success of exclusion under communal-property regimes. Even in
terms of private property, the legitimacy of state property in the eyes of the local community is important for enforcement (Berkes et al. 2001). These international cases are inspiring Taiwanese indigenous people, and the implementation of co-management of natural resources reflects a greater need for sovereignty that comes from a doctrine of communal property. Under communal-property regimes, ‘exclusion’ means the ability to exclude people other than the members of a defined group (Berkes et al. 2001).

I found, however, that indigenous locals did not stubbornly insist on ‘total’ sovereignty in the way that a nation state demands full control. Instead, they were willing to accept ‘soft’ sovereignty in the form of co-management in areas of ambiguous properties. In fact, the role the government plays is still based on the prerequisite of nation sovereignty. Given the many frustrations experienced by indigenous practitioners, it is no wonder that they insist on starting from a definition of property. Indigenous locals are looking for adjustments to the governance of natural resources and who is entitled to what rights regarding certain property types. The question of autonomy or co-management is next on the agenda.

Photo 10.1
Entrance to the Pratan village