ON THE ETHNONYM 'UTSAT'

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1. ETHNONYMS FOR THE UTSAT PEOPLE[1]

Utsat is the ethnonym preferred by the Chamic-speaking Muslims of Hainan Island and can be said to be an autonym.[2] The Utsat now number about 6,000 and are concentrated in two villages near Sanya on the southern tip of Hainan Island. They use *Utsat* to refer to themselves when speaking in their indigenous language, and they refer to their language as *Tsat.* Thus non-Tsat speakers, including those scholars who study the Utsat people without learning to use Tsat, will usually not be aware of this term (see Pang 1992). In English-language literature since 1992 Western linguists and scholars have used the name Utsat (see Pang 1992, Maddieson & Pang 1993, and Thurgood 1993).

The Utsat have been previously known to the world as *Hui.* Hui is the Utsat's ethnic identity or nationality name officially decided upon during the 1950s when the People's Republic of China's Minority Nationalities Commission began work to identify the minority nationalities. Hui, however, is also a Han Chinese term commonly understood to refer to the Chinese-speaking Muslims (see Pillsbury 1989, 1973, and Gladney 1989, 1991), and is often erroneously extended in Han conversation to refer to all Muslims in general.[3] In Chinese linguistic literature, the Utsat have been referred to as Hainan Hui and their language as *Hui-Hui hua* 'Hui-Hui language' (Ouyang and Zheng 1983, Zheng 1986, and Ni Dabai 1988). The local Han people may also refer to the Tsat language as *Hui hua* or possibly *Hui-Hui hua.* But the Utsat people do not normally use *Hui-Hui hua.*

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2 See Benedict (1987) for a discussion of autonyms and exonyms. Benedict (1941) was the first to suggest a Chamic origin for the Utsat as described by Stubel (1937). See Pang (in progress) for a reassessment of the linguistic, archaeological, and cultural evidence regarding the Chamic origin of the Utsat. For Chinese writings on the origins of the Hainan Hui see Dong (1985), Li and Tian (1986), Jiang and Mei (1986), and Chen and Jiang (1988).

3 I have argued elsewhere (Pang 1987, 1992:29–38) that the Utsat could have qualified as the eleventh Muslim minority nationality in the People's Republic of China because they are historically, linguistically, and culturally clearly distinct from mainland Hui by every criterion listed by the Minority Nationalities Commission. It is noteworthy that in a graduation essay written by two Utsat religious scholars they chose to call themselves Hainan Muslims rather than Hui.

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In speaking Hainanese the Utsat tend to refer to their language as *Huan-uei* 'Huan language', and they themselves are known in Hainanese as the Huan people.

Since not all people on the mainland who identify themselves as Hui are practising Muslims, the more sophisticated Hui and Hui scholars (see Gladney 1991) on the mainland make a distinction between 'Hui' as an ethnic identity and 'Hui' for Muslim or Islam. For the same reason the more sophisticated and better travelled Utsat also prefer to call themselves *Hainan Mu-si-lin* ('Hainan Muslim' in Mandarin) instead of Hui. The Utsat who are not practising Muslims are referred to as having 'become Han'. The term *I-si-lan-jiao* 'Islam religion' is more properly used to refer to the religion of Islam.

When the Utsat emigrated to Malaysia they became known as Orang Kwangtung by the Muslim Malays (see Pang 1994). With the passing of the pioneering generation in Malaysia both the Tsat language and the ethnonym Utsat have dropped out of use.[4]

The social reality in Hainan is complex. My anthropological research among the Utsat for almost two years (1987–1989 and shorter visits in 1991, 1993, and 1994) using a combination of Tsat, Hainanese, Mandarin, and Malay languages exposed me to the fact that the Utsat have multiple ethnic identities. Variously known as Hui, Utsat, and Huan-nang, each ethnic identity is mediated through a specific language use (respectively Mandarin, Tsat, and Hainanese). Each identity has a specific contextualised local history which emphasises different aspects of being Utsat. I have elaborated elsewhere on Utsat's repertoire of simultaneous ethnic identities (see Pang 1995).

In this article, I will focus specifically on the various meanings of the ethnonym 'Utsat' as opposed to other ethnonyms, examining how the ethnonym is used linguistically, and offering culturally grounded analyses of everyday Utsat social interactions and their discourses about being Utsat. I cite several instances where the use of the Tsat language has helped me to understand the term *Utsat* in its multiple meanings and contextual usage.

2. UTSAT AS DIFFERENTIATED FROM OTHER PEOPLES

How is the term 'Utsat' used in everyday discourse? When a stranger walks into an Utsat village, the Utsat people might ask each other the following question:

Nau si Utsat ahsi Ulo?[5]

(He/She is Utsat or Ulo?)

Is he/she an Utsat or Ulo?

On my first day of language-learning through social immersion, this very question alerted me to the existence of the term 'Utsat' which up to that time had not been mentioned in either the Chinese or foreign academic literature. Utsat was clearly being used as an ethnonym/autonym that contrasted with Ulo.

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4 See Pang (1989) for an analysis of the Utsat's Southeast Asian connections.

5 I am not using the IPA phonetic symbols or making a precise phonetic or phonemic transcription. As an anthropologist who is thus far the only scholar to have done long-term fieldwork using this Austronesian language, I hope this contribution will clarify why the Utsat of Hainan Island are not simply 'Hui'—the term by which they and many Muslims of mainland China who speak Chinese languages as their indigenous languages are known.

Who is an Ulo? In its most inclusive and general meaning, an Ulo is simply a non-believer in Islam, a kafir. This meaning will become clearer when we later discuss the use of Utsat to mean simply Muslim—the explanation most commonly asserted by the Utsat themselves. However, in the everyday local context, Ulo more specifically refers to the Han Chinese who are non-Muslims. Interestingly, the term *lo* in Tsat means 'meat' in general, as in *lo-phui* 'meat-pig' (pork) and *lo-mo* 'meat-cow' (beef). It is not inconceivable that the Utsat first used the term Ulo to refer to non-Muslims in their midst who routinely ate pork, which is abhorred by Muslims. This reasoning finds further support in another Chamic language when we observe that the Western Cham speakers use the term *lo* (in a lower tone than that used in tonal Utsat) to describe the Chinese in Cambodia.[6] Whether this is a Proto Chamic term for both 'meat' and 'Chinese' remains to be seen.

How do these terms, Utsat and Ulo, fit into basic Utsat taxonomic classification of peoples? In their least elaborated taxonomic classification, if asked "How many types/kinds of people are there?", many Utsat would respond first with "Utsat, Ulo, Ulait, and Ulait-miao" before elaborating on each category. It is noteworthy that while the terms Utsat and Ulo might have theoretically covered all the world's people as 'Muslim' and 'Non-Muslim', the Utsat clearly differentiate themselves and the Ulo from the local Ulait and Ulait-miao. The latter two terms are ethnonyms for the Li and Miao people who are considered by Utsat to be "people who stay in the forests". Although many Li people now live in the cities and some Li girls have recently been employed by Utsat as live-in nanny-housekeepers, many Utsat elders recall seeing bare-breasted Li women and Li men in loincloths as recently as 60 years ago. It is also conceptually interesting that the Miao are classified as a subgroup of the Li, even though the Utsat can describe the cultural and linguistic differences between them. The Miao, actually Yao-speakers not linguistically or culturally related to the Miao (Hmong) from mainland China (Jacques Lemoine pers.comm.), are also more feared and less encountered by the coastal living Utsat. I would suggest that, to the Utsat, the Li and the Miao are not only distinct from the Han Chinese but were also viewed in earlier times as being somewhat savage and subhuman because they were forest or hill dwellers. Thus the basic taxonomy includes Li and Miao as separate categories of people.

3. UTSAT AS BEING MUSLIM

Who is an Utsat then? When asked to articulate how Utsat are different from the Ulo, the most commonly listed characteristics were: "We Utsat believe in Allah, the Ulo pray to many gods" or "We Utsat do not eat pork, the Ulo do". Many Utsat also feel a sense of moral superiority over the Han Chinese, a sense which derives from knowing that good Utsat will enter heaven upon death if they practise Islamic teachings well. This sense of moral superiority finds expression among Utsat women sellers of vegetables and fruits in the city markets or by the roadside when they say to me in Tsat (or in Hainanese and Mandarin to Han Chinese):

Mi Utsat pu phian dzat. 'We Utsat do not cheat people.'

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6 This data came from my field research in 1994–95 among both Cambodian and Vietnamese Cham refugees now resettled in California. It was partially funded by a postdoctoral fellowship from the multi-disciplinary New Ethnic and Immigrant Congregation Project, directed by sociologist Stephen R. Warner, University of Illinois, Chicago.

The unwavering belief that an Utsat vegetable seller would not short-change her customer in the market minimises price-negotiating because the Utsat will often tell the customer "You do not have to worry, we do not cheat people. Our Allah will know if we cheat".

This Islamic core of Utsat identity is clearly so basic to the Utsat that any Utsat will articulate that 'Utsat' means 'Muslim'. Indeed, to them all the world's Muslims are Utsat people, differentiated only by nationality or region. In Tsat, the practising Hui Muslims on the mainland are described as 'Utsat Talok' (mainland Muslims). The Uighur or other Turkic-speaking Muslims from Xinjiang province would be called 'Utsat Sinkiang'. Similarly, American Muslims would be known as 'Utsat Meikok' (Muslim Americans) while Saudi Muslims are 'Utsat Saute'.

Indeed, we can see how deeply entrenched this Islamic core is by noting the fact that to study Islam or the Koran is usually referred to as *phai kha:d tsat* (to study Arabic/Islamic words). To go to Islamic school is *nauk hok kha:d tsat* as opposed to going to a Han Chinese school which is *nauk hok kha:d lo*. Similarly, each Utsat person typically has three types of names, a Muslim name, a school-going Chinese name, and a nickname. The Muslim name is referred to as *nan kha:d tsat* and is the first name given to a child, usually nine days after birth. Thus the term *kha:d tsat* can be glossed as 'Islamic words' or 'Arabic or Koranic language'.

The Islamic core of Utsat identity is also underscored by the fact that 'becoming Utsat' (*ngau Utsat*) is something to be achieved performatively by first becoming Muslim. Learning the Tsat language comes later. It is unlike the Hui identity, where one is Hui because one has Hui blood (see Pillsbury 1976). Being Utsat and remaining Utsat is a performative act. An Utsat who no longer practises Islam will be said to have become Han (*ngau Ulo*), even if this person still speaks the Tsat language. The converse is also true. Take my position as an anthropologist in the community, for example. I have often been asked to become Utsat for several reasons. Most Utsat say that I should become Utsat because I have lived with them for a long time, because I understand Utsat culture and Muslim customs, and, last, because I already speak Tsat (which means I have the communicative skills to live meaningfully in their society). However, I cannot be called an Utsat unless I decide to convert ('enter the religion') and become a Muslim. Thus, for example, I have been exhorted in Tsat:

Ha ma kiau ngau utsat. 'You enter religion and become Utsat.'

The fact that the Utsat regard the Islamic core of their identity as being central to their articulations of selfhood as a people is not surprising when we note in their myths of origin that only the Utsat who decided to remain living together in the same place with fellow Utsat remained Utsat. Those who decided to stay in Han-dominated areas presumably became Han. Indeed, there are several coastal cities in Hainan where a section of town is known as 'fan-cun' (barbarian or foreign villages) in the historical literature (see Pang 1992). It is noteworthy that the Utsat have no folk or oral history indicating a conversion to Islam, which suggests that the Utsat either came to Hainan Island as Muslims, or were converted too long ago to retain this fact even in their oral tradition. The latter scenario is not inconceivable when we consider that historically there was an ancient Muslim settlement in Hainan which was described by a Chinese traveller in the eighth century as 'Persian' (see Gerini 1974:471, fn.2). The existence of this ancient Muslim settlement might explain who were the Muslim people buried in an extensive area near Lingshui marked with coral Muslim tombstones (see Zhong 1984, Li and Wang 1987, and Chen and Salmon n.d.). It is important to note that

tombstones were not considered by the Utsat to be part of their historical or oral traditions, nor is this area regarded as their ancestral burial ground.

4. UTSAT IN LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Nevertheless, from both anthropological and linguistic perspectives, it is clear that *Utsat* is meaningful as an ethnonym in ways other than those articulated by the Utsat in everyday discourse. For example, when we see the linguistic correspondence between the terms Utsat, Ulo, and Ulait whereby Utsat people speak Tsat, Ulo people speak Lo, and the Ulait people speak Lait, it is reasonable to infer that the term Utsat means 'people who speak Tsat'. The prefix 'u' in each of these ethnonyms is clearly a root Austronesian term which means 'people'. This is, however, a meaning of Utsat which is not articulated by the Utsat themselves. This suggests that the morpheme 'u' is no longer a productive morpheme in modern Tsat language (Maddieson, pers.comm. 1992).

From a comparative Chamic perspective, an etymology of the term 'Utsat' has been offered by Mark Durie (pers.comm. 1993) who suggested that the term *Tsat* corresponds regularly with *Cham*, with the loss of labial articulation in the final nasal of *Cham*.

5. CONCLUSION

In analysing the various meanings of *Utsat* among the Utsat people, there is clearly a conflation of both religious and cultural elements, with the Islamic core of their identity superseding all others. It is not enough to be able to speak the Tsat language to be Utsat, one must be a practising Muslim.

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