

# Brill's Encyclopedia of Taiwan

## Sediq

(990 words)

Sediq is the name of an ethnic group and a language (ISO 639-3: trv), but it was originally the word for “person” or “people” (whether definite or indefinite) in the Toda dialect of that language. There are three dialects, Toda, Tgdaya, and Truku, in which the word for person is pronounced *sediq*, *seediq*, and *seejiq* respectively. Sediq is the ethnonym under which Watan Diro (Toda), Dakis Pawan (Tgdaya), and Pawan Tanah (Truku) applied to the central government for recognition, which the Sediq, who have a population of under ten thousand and a home base in Ren'ai Township, Nantou County, received on April 24, 2008. (The Truku who live in Hualien had received recognition in 2004, to the dismay of central Taiwan Sediq elites, who consider Truku an ethnic and linguistic branch of Sediq.) But no matter what dialect they speak, elites like Watan Diro (given name, patronym) stress the equality of the dialects in terms of 3S3T: 3S stands for the three pronunciations of the word for person, 3T for the three dialects.

Before 2008, the Sediq had been identified as Atayal. This identification dates to an early postwar recommendation based on Japanese colonial ethnology, but on linguistic grounds, the Sediq are distinct. They were treated as distinct in late-19th century wordlists, in Sayama's 1917 ethnography, and in Ogawa and Asai's 1935 collection of myths. In one myth, the Sediq are descended from the Pusu Qhuni, literally the “root” (*pusu*) “tree” (*qhuni*), which is located to the southeast of Sediq territory, whereas the Atayal trace their origin to Pinsbkan to the north. While Sediq *gaya* and Atayal *gaga* are cognates with commonalities in usage – as nouns, both mean “morality,” “law,” and even “culture,” while the verbs *mgaya* and *mgaga* both mean “to headhunt” – there are also differences. Unlike *gaya*, *gaga* is also a word for a subgrouping of a *qalang*, a clan-based village community that was presumably fenced (because *qalang* is also the imperative of a verb meaning “to fence”). In Seediq, the term *alang* is used for both village community and subgroupings (for example, see Paran below).

The fact that the first Seediq *alang* was called Truwan, literally “place” (*-an*) of “three” (*teru*), suggests that the division into Tgdaya, Toda, and Truku was ancient. From Truwan, the 3Ts set out to found their own communities. By the colonial era (1895-), there were a dozen Tgdaya, five Toda, and four Truku villages with a roughly southwest Tgdaya northeast Toda / Truku distribution, in loose alliances. The largest village was Paran. Counted as one of the dozen Tgdaya *alang*, Paran was itself composed of four *alang*, with a total population of several hundred people and a chief; but in pre-state times, *alang* were smaller and more egalitarian. They were also more mobile: villagers hunted, gathered, and practiced swidden agriculture somewhere until the local terrain was exhausted, then moved on.

After a colonial mission to prospect a cross-island rail route was massacred in 1897, the Sediq were placed under embargo, but continued to live beyond the pale. The Japanese failed to take the Renzhiguan, a gorge formed by the Meixi River that formed a natural defense to Sediq territory, in 1902, but in 1903 Sediq warriors, most of them from Paran, fell into a trap when they went to trade with the Bunun, who were not under embargo. The Bunun were also

collaborating with the Japanese. Around a hundred Sediq warriors were slaughtered as they slept. In addition to pursuing a strategy of divide and conquer, the Japanese mounted large guns on promontories to pummel villages into submission. By the late 1920s, all the Sediq chiefs had submitted. The authorities confiscated firearms, but governed through the chiefs, to whose daughters they married subalterns, until the late 1920s, when they transferred governance duties to subalterns in a push to develop the town of Musha, which they had built right next to Paran, into a hill station. Excessive corvée demands on young Seediq men to supply the lumber for development was identified as a cause of the 1930 Musha Incident, a rebellion launched on October 27 by Tgdaya chief Mona Rudo. But Mona Rudo's sense of his increasing irrelevance was likely also a factor. The rebellion reset the intraethnic balance of power, as rebel Tgdaya survivors were moved to a village called Kawanakajima (Qingliu in Mandarin, Gluban in Sediq) the better to surveil them, and Truku and Toda villages who had collaborated during the reprisal occupied abandoned Tgdaya villages. Many children of rebels and collaborators suffered together when they volunteered for the Japanese imperial war effort. 3S3T is in part an effort to heal old wounds in the Sediq community. But it is also the slogan of an ongoing revitalization project.

In response to the indigenous movement in the 1980s, 3S3T elites have been engaged in various activities to reverse culture and language shift. The first activities were organized through the Catholic and Presbyterian churches. Temi Nawi, a former Catholic nun, published educational volumes on traditional plants, weaving, and myths. Kumu Tapas, a Presbyterian pastor, published bilingual materials about the Musha Incident and, more recently, Sediq ethnobotany. Today, revitalization efforts are also state-supported. There is a preschool language-nest program and a Master's program in Sediq culture at Providence University, run by educators Iwan Pering and Lituk Teymu. There is an experimental Sediq elementary school. There is a weekly one-hour newscast in which news stories in Mandarin are sight-translated by the anchor into Sediq. One committee translates modern terminology for the online Sediq dictionary. Another committee translates articles for a Sediq-language Wikipedia (Wikipidiya). Yet another committee has recently completed a translation of the Bible into Tgdaya.

The Sediq once consulted with their ancestors through the *sisil* (*sisin* in Tgdaya), a bird oracle. Today they consider the *sisil* their "national" bird. Apparently, the *sisil* still guides Sediq people in matters of *gaya*, which they once practiced in small forest-based communities, as they reinvent it today.

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