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Electoral Mobilisation and Gender: Factors Contributing to Female Indigenous Candidates in Local City and County Elections*

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Abstract

In both Han and Indigenous electoral constituencies, the proportion of women elected to city and county councils has shown a steady upward trend. While female candidates from both groups encounter comparable challenges during their campaigns, significant differences remain. This exploratory study seeks to identify and analyze the key factors that influence Indigenous women's candidacies in local council elections. Drawing on qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews, this paper focuses on the recruitment processes of Indigenous female candidates, the structural and cultural barriers and opportunities encountered during electoral campaigns, and the candidates' perspectives on women's participation in the political sphere. Findings indicate that, in contrast to the female reserved seat system implemented in Han constituencies, the effectiveness of such mechanisms in Indigenous districts is relatively constrained, functioning

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primarily as an incentive for candidacy rather than a guarantee of representation. Although traditional customs may limit female candidates' participation in certain ceremonial or cultural activities, the decreasing resistance from clan structures has opened up greater space for women to engage in electoral politics. Notably, candidates who secure support from their clan networks are more likely to achieve electoral success. Electoral mobilisation in Indigenous constituencies tends to rely on an outreach strategy, involving face-to-face engagement with individual voters. Religious institutions, particularly churches, serve as critical venues for campaign activities. However, non-Christian candidates may find their outreach capacities restricted due to limited access to these communal platforms. Furthermore, proficiency in Indigenous languages has been found to enhance candidates' ability to broaden their support base among voters.

Overall, the dynamics of clan and tribal politics significantly shape the distinctive features of Indigenous elections, underscoring the structural divergences from electoral practices observed in Han constituencies.

Keywords: Indigenous female candidate, female reserved seat system, campaign mobilisation, clan and tribal politics, gender

Introduction

Local elections have been held in Taiwan since the 1950s, providing opportunities for political elites to influence politics, especially under the KMT authoritarian rule. After lifting martial law, Taiwanese politics entered a new page with a competitive party system. As Taiwanese democracy progressed, reserved seats for women were gradually institutionalised. As scholars in Taiwan have found, this system increases women's representation and encourages more women to enter politics (Batto et al. 2014; Juang et al. 2018). This is also the case in Indigenous people's electoral politics, where the reserved seats system has played a significant role in the increasing number of female Indigenous Councillors.

Indigenous people, comprising 2.56 per cent of Taiwan's population. Unlike the Maori of New Zealand, who can choose to vote in a Maori district or a general district, Indigenous people can only cast votes in the Indigenous districts in Taiwan. The election results from the Central Election Commission in Taiwan reveal a noteworthy trend. The number of Indigenous female candidates has risen over the past two decades. In terms of the elected councillors, the percentage of female Indigenous councillors increased from 17.2 per cent in 2002 council elections[1] to a remarkable 40.6 per cent in the latest election (2022). These results underscore the significant increase in Indigenous women's political participation over the past decade. The question that arises is, what factors are important to Indigenous female candidates' electoral performance?

Research on women's political participation has identified social and cultural structures (such as sex roles socialisation variables) and political structures (such as quota design or political party affiliation) as factors that can restrict women's electoral participation (Chiang 2009; 2011; Huang 2016; Yang 2000).

[1] The data includes 2001 county/city council election and 2002 municipal elections.

These findings have been largely confirmed in studies on women's political involvement in Taiwan, primarily at the national legislative level. However, there is a dearth of systematic studies on local council elections and even fewer on Indigenous people's electoral politics. This gap in research highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Indigenous women's political participation.

The election outcomes of Han and Indigenous female candidates show a growing trend in female winners. While both groups face similar challenges during their campaigns, there are also distinct differences. Thus, this exploratory study seeks to identify and understand some of the more important factors influencing Indigenous female candidates. By collecting data from in-depth interviews, this paper examines various aspects of Indigenous female candidates' presence in politics and their campaigns, including their recruitment to run for office, the barriers and chances female candidates face during the campaigns, and views on women's participation in electoral politics.

Taken from interviews, this paper finds that, unlike the reserved seat system in Han districts, its effectiveness in Indigenous electoral districts is relatively weaker. Traditional customs limit the opportunities for female candidates to gain public exposure. However, with fewer hindrances from the clan, women have more opportunities to participate in electoral politics. In matriarchal societies, there tend to be more female candidates and elected officials. Additionally, securing votes in Indigenous districts requires active outreach, and churches play a crucial role in election campaigns. In addition, being able to speak the native language also helps expand voter support. Overall, clan and tribe politics highlight the features of the Indigenous elections. These aspects make Indigenous elections quite different from Han elections. Ultimately, this preliminary research hopes to accumulate and enhance more knowledge on how Indigenous women participate in electoral politics in Taiwan.

An Explanatory Framework for Indigenous Women's Presence in Politics

Scholars have indicated several factors that influence women's engagement in politics. These critical factors include personal motivation, political socialisation process, spouse and in-law attitudes, electoral systems, party politics, social and cultural, and religious norms (Chiang 2005, 36). We can roughly divide these factors into political, personal background, and social and cultural perspectives. In the following section, this paper will review related research in general and Indigenous studies specifically according to the factors above.

Political Perspective: Electoral System, female reserved seat system, and Political Party

The local council elections are held every four years, and the latest election was held in 2022, in which voters voted for municipal and city/county councillors. A single non-transferable voting system (SNTV) was adopted for the local council election. The SNTV functions in a multi-member district, and political parties have incentives to nominate more than one candidate in a district to maximise their winning seats. Also, the electoral system serves as an incentive to stand for the election of an independent candidate. A reserved seat system was also adopted in the local council elections to encourage more women to engage in the political process and present in politics. One seat is reserved for women in districts with magnitudes of between 4 to 7 seats. Likewise, two seats would be reserved for women in a district within 8 to 11 seats. However, no seat will be reserved for women if the district's magnitude is less than 4 seats. Due to the small population in each Indigenous district, only one Indigenous district meets the reserved seat system.

Article 33 of the Local Government Act states, “If the number of Indigenous people from mountain and plains areas in a county (city) electoral district is more than four, there should be a quota for women to be elected.” Since the provision does not specify “in the same electoral district” in the 2009 election, the Taitung County Election Commission combined the eight seats of the four plains Indigenous electoral districts in the county, resulting in two seats being reserved for women (Juang et al. 2012, 55). Following this interpretation, in Hualien County, the combined 5th to 7th plains Indigenous electoral districts had seven seats, with one seat reserved for women; in Pingtung County, the combined 9th to 16th mountain Indigenous electoral districts had eight seats, with two seats reserved for women; in Taitung County, the combined 7th to 11th plains Indigenous electoral districts had eight seats, with two seats reserved for women, and the combined 12th to 16th mountain Indigenous electoral districts had five seats, resulting in one seat reserved for women (See Appendix, Table 1). Thus, there should be 7 seats in total reserved for female candidates. It needs to be emphasised that the Han people constituencies apply to a single-district quota; however, most Indigenous constituencies apply to a multi-district quota. Batto (2019, 132) pointed out that multi-district quotas produced less substantive difference in female seats than single-district. Indigenous female candidates, thus, face a more changeling condition than their Han counterparts. Moreover, only two Indigenous female candidates have been elected over the past two decades due to the reserved seat system. Hence, the institutional factor seems unable to account for the presence of Indigenous women in politics.

Candidates who stand for elections depend on the opportunities available and their chances of winning office. Unlike national-level elections, local councillor elections are held in a multiple-member districts, and the electoral system (SNTV) yields a higher proportionality than the single-member district (Farrell 2011, 42). It provides more opportunities for those who want to pursue office to get elected. Accordingly, scholars found that political parties are more willing to

nominate female candidates in a multiple-member district, especially if the electoral system has a women's quota (Caul 1999; Reynolds 1999). Juang et al. (2018) also found that female candidates nominated by a political party are likelier to win the councillor post and get a higher percentage of vote shares in Taiwan.

Party identification has been essential in explaining Taiwanese voting behaviour (Yu 2017). Voters tend to vote for the candidates from the party they identified. Being nominated by the political party, a party-affiliated candidate has a higher chance of gathering more votes than an independent one. Hence, for an individual, joining a political party is one way to be nominated as a candidate and win a post. On the one hand, political parties can mobilise supporters to vote for party candidates. On the other hand, voters tend to cast their votes based on their party preference. Several Indigenous studies in Taiwan have confirmed this. Pao (2011) and Pao and Hsieh (2013) argued that the Kuomintang's (the KMT) organisations can mobilise about 40 per cent of Indigenous voters by establishing a solid network in the tribes. Pao and Chou (2019, 178) also found that more than 47 per cent of Indigenous voters identified with the KMT, while 11 per cent identified with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Therefore, Indigenous candidates tend to join the KMT more than the DPP.

Political Family Background, Tribes, and Clans

Several studies have shown that a candidate's characteristics, such as education level, political experience, or coming from a political family, are advantages for pursuing a political career (Leyenaar 2004, 58). Due to inherited networks, dynastic candidates will likely raise more political donations than others (Feinstein 2010, 574). They are more likely to win elections and become incumbents due to inheritance resources from the family (Batto and Read 2024; Smith 2020, 10). Besides, a female candidate from a political family is introduced to politics through socialization. Family ties give female candidates more political capital

and resources regarding personal network support or political skills. However, from a political family, females may not have the same chance as their male siblings to pursue political office. Traditional gender stereotypes still play a role. Only when a male is unable or absent in standing for the elections does a female receive the opportunity to enter the pool of candidates and run for office (Chiang 2011). Different tribes of Indigenous people have different customs, conventions, and social class structures (Hsieh 2017, 25). For example, Amis, Puyuma, Sakizaya, and Kavalan tribes, the society operates based on an age-grade system, and their social culture leans toward a matriarchal society. By contrast, the Bunun, Saisiyat, Truku, and Atayal tribes have a social culture that leans toward a patriarchal society.[2] The family inheritance in these tribes tends to prioritize males. In a patriarchal society, women face greater difficulties when running for office. Thus, this paper expects that in a matriarchal society, Indigenous female candidates might be more encouraged to run and potentially appear in greater numbers compared to a patriarchal society.

Chiang (2011, 185) indicated that "kinship and geographical factors" have continued influencing Taiwanese women's chances of pursuing a political career. Kinship or clan politics is one of the essential elements in studying Indigenous people's elections. Studies have shown that Indigenous people vote along tribe lines (Pao and Hsieh 2013; Pao and Chou 2019). For example, Pao and Chou (2019) indicated that Indigenous voters exhibit a tendency for ethnic-based voting in the legislative election. Compared to other Indigenous groups, Paiwan, Atayal, and Seediq voters are more likely to support candidates from the same ethnic background. This is because social networks and social capital based on kinship are highly overlapping in Indigenous communities. During elections, interpersonal mobilisation extends from kinship and clan networks to tribal

[2] Rukai, Tsou, Thao, Yami (Tao), Seediq, Hla'alua, and Kanakanavu tribes are also patriarchal societies. The Paiwan tribe is more lean to a society with gender equality.

networks. This results in Indigenous voters engaging in tribe voting behaviour (Pao and Chou 2019). Therefore, it is possible to see that electoral mobilisation largely depends on blood ties (family), interpersonal networks ("Guanxi"), and the same tribe in the Indigenous districts.

Social and Cultural Perspectives

Paxton et al. (2006) pointed out that social structure and cultural characteristics influence women's political representation in a country. As mentioned above, different Indigenous tribes have their own social structures and customs. Take the Amis, the largest Indigenous group, as an example. The age-grade system of the Amis tribe primarily carries military, administrative, and political functions within the tribe, with each grade having its designated name. This system, along with the matriarchal structure, highlights the cultural distinction in gender roles and the social division of labour between family affairs and public tribal affairs.[3] In Saisiyat tribes, a patriarchal society, public affairs within the tribe are collectively discussed and decided by a council of clan elders, then carried out by the tribal leader. For Indigenous women to run for office, they may need to gain the support of the tribal elders or leaders before they can enter the election.

The barriers to women standing for elections are higher than men, and this is not just because of the social structure. Cultural factors such as gender stereotypes or gender consciousness also play a role. The traditional expectation of women is to "stay at home and take good care of children". Female candidates are expected to take good care of their families before pursuing their political careers. For a male candidate, therefore, marital status is not an important issue, but this is so for female candidates. Further, due to the sex-role stereotype, vot-

[3] See introduction of Indigenous tribes from Council of Indigenous Peoples. https://reurl.cc/yDaQ06.

ers tend to view female candidates as having less capability and skills in politics than males. Thus, female candidates face more disadvantageous situations than males (Ballington and Kahane 2014, 307-308). In higher levels of urbanised constituencies, voters tend to have higher levels of education and may be more inclined to embrace gender equality. We may expect that female Indigenous candidates find it easier to campaign in a more urbanised district.

In the 17th century, Catholicism was first introduced to Taiwan's Indigenous society. In the late 19th century, missionaries from the Presbyterian church came to Taiwan and gradually took root in the Indigenous society (Hsieh 2017, 103-104; Zhan 2019, 94-104). Nowadays, many Indigenous people are religious, either Catholic or Protestant. Religions are part of Indigenous people's daily lives; thus, it can be expected that the church plays a vital role during the elections. Indigenous people get together on Sundays or holidays, allowing candidates to reach them all at once. The church also provides candidates a platform to build networks with voters. Therefore, we can expect Indigenous candidates will try to participate in or get involved with churches' activities to expand votes.

Different Indigenous ethnic groups possess their own native languages. As previously mentioned, Indigenous people display ethnic-based voting behaviour. During the campaign, the ability to speak the native language can significantly help candidates garner votes and foster stronger connections with voters. According to social identity theory, language acts as a boundary that distinguishes in-groups from out-groups. Individuals categorise themselves and others into groups, and language serves as a crucial marker of these social identities. Social identity groups provide individuals with a sense of belonging and self-definition (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Consequently, candidates who are fluent in the native language can enhance their campaign efforts and broaden their electoral support base.

Overall, the political perspective focuses on the reserved-seat system and party affiliation. The personal background examines family networks and tribes.

The social and cultural perspectives consider patriarchal or matriarchal tribes, the district types (e.g., urban or not), the role of the church, and the use of native language. Some factors have similar impacts in Han and Indigenous constituencies, while others differ significantly. After introducing the research method and data in next section, this paper will first provide an overview on Indigenous electoral results and then move to explores how these factors are associated with Indigenous women's participation in elections.

Research Method and Data

This paper aims to understand the factors that are important in influencing Indigenous female candidates. An in-depth interview is a qualitative approach to collecting data. Compared with surveys, respondents can use their own words to illustrate their thoughts or opinions. It also allows researchers to clarify ideas or puzzles by probing further questions into respondents during the interview. Thus, the in-depth interview is an appropriate method for collecting detailed information from candidates for our research. Besides analysing the candidates' perspectives, points of view from people familiar with Indigenous electoral politics assist us in a better understanding of the phenomena, too. Therefore, we approached three types of potential interviewees in this research: Indigenous candidates, party workers, and local journalists.

This study targeted all female candidates in the 2018 local elections and employed a snowball sampling method to reach local affairs practitioners and party workers. A total of 50 individuals were contacted for this study.[4] Among them, 19 candidates declined to be interviewed, 7 did not respond after being contacted, and interviews were successfully completed with 24 individuals. These

[4] Contact information for 9 female candidates could not be obtained; therefore, they were not reached.

included 17 candidates, 5 party staff, and 2 local affairs experts. The interviews were conducted from October 2021 to January 2023. Each interview provided respondents with a standard interview guideline and lasted for 1.5 to 2 hours. For details about the interviewees, see Appendix Table 2.

An Overview of Indigenous Electoral Results: 2002-2018

Electoral results provided some background information on the Indigenous women's engagement in the elections. First, more Indigenous female candidates have been elected (see Figure 1) for the past two decades. A clear key point is the 2014 local elections, the election right after the Sunflower Movement. Some conditions are the same such as electoral systems, but some are different, such as social atmosphere. As stated in an interview, Miao Po-ya (苗博雅), currently serving as a second-term city councillor and ran for legislator in 2016, believes that one of the most significant impacts of the Sunflower Movement is "increasing the prevalence and awareness of political participation among the younger generation."[5] Speaking about the changes brought about by the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan, Akutagawa Prize winner, Li Kotomi (李琴峰), stated in an interview with Japanese media that after experiencing the Sunflower Movement, Taiwanese people hold the belief that "one person alone may not succeed, but if many people unite, they can achieve it."[6] The movement encourages Taiwanese, especially young people, to engage in politics actively. More people tend to be more interested in politics and have a more open attitude towards women getting involved in politics.

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[5] Central News Agency (CNA). 2024. "Sunflower Movement and Politics: Miao Po-ya: Reforms Requires Not Only Social Movement But Also Political Cooperation." *Central News Agency* (*CNA*.) https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aipl/202403160124.aspx?topic=4442 (accessed Feb 3, 2025)

[6] Central News Agency (CNA). 2024. "Taiwanese Youth Actively Engage in Politics—Li Kotomi: Belief Formed After the Sunflower Movement." *Central News Agency* (*CNA*.) https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aipl/202403150106.aspx?topic=4442 (accessed Feb 3, 2025)

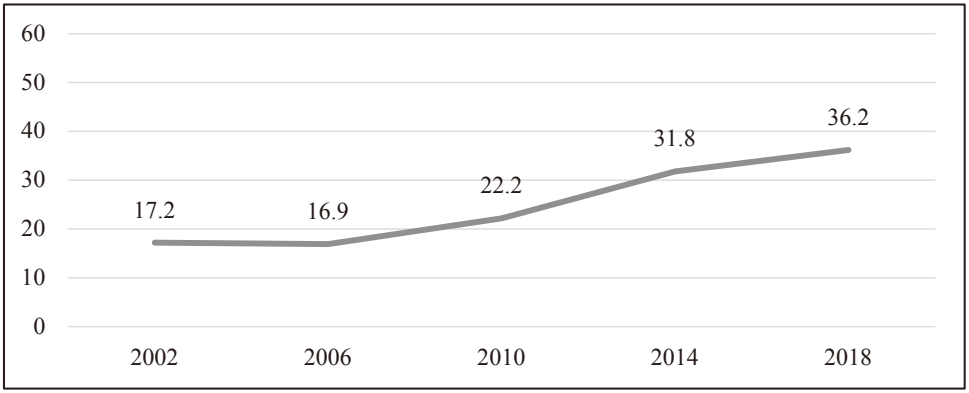

Figure 1. Percentage of Elected Female Indigenous Council Members, 2002-2018[7]

Source: Compiled by the author from the Central Election Commission Election Database.

Second, this paper categorises the candidates based on their tribes into patriarchal, matriarchal, or egalitarian societies. It presents the results of female candidates and elected councillors in each societal type in Figures 2 and 3. Matriarchal societies have more female candidates than patriarchal societies between the elections in 2002 and 2018. Since 2010, female candidates from matriarchal societies have also surpassed female candidates from the Paiwan tribe (equal society). In terms of elected Indigenous women, a similar pattern was found as female candidates in the results in Figure 2. In matriarchal societies, the percentage of elected Indigenous women is higher than in patriarchal societies (See Figure 3).

[7] For the purpose of analysis consistency, this paper combines the data from the 2001 County and City Council elections with the 2002 Municipal Council elections, collectively referring to them as the 2002 election. Similarly, the data from the 2005 County and City Council and the 2006 Municipal Council elections are merged and referred to as the 2006 election. Lastly, the data from the 2009 County and City Council elections and the 2010 Municipal Council elections are combined and referred to as the 2010 election.

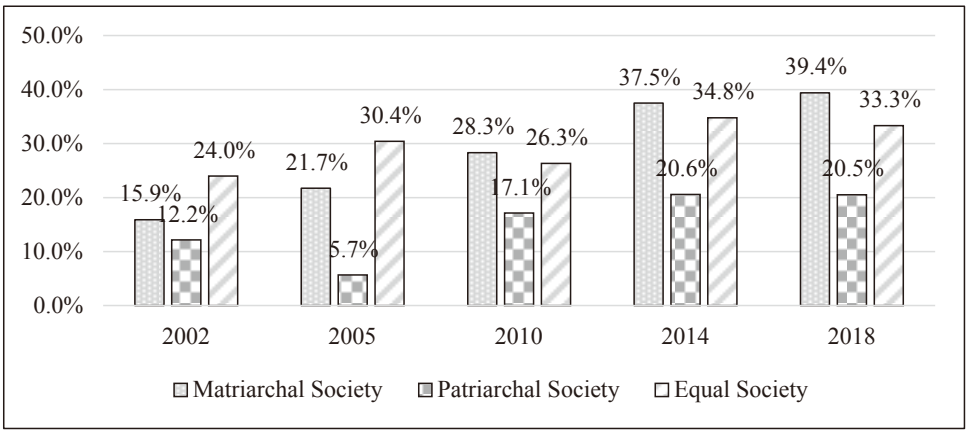

Figure 2. Percentage of Indigenous Female Candidates in Different Society, 2002-2018

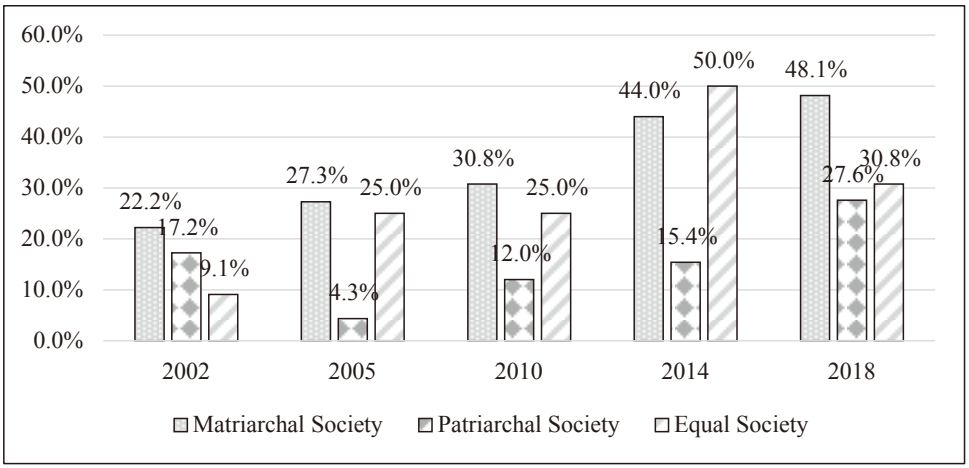

Figure 3. Percentage of Elected Indigenous Women in Different Society, 2002-2018

A higher level of urbanization indicates a higher degree of industrial and commercial development, a higher economic standard, and a more concentrated population. Following this definition, plains districts are more urbanised than mountains districts. Results from Figures 4 and 5 show that more female than male candidates get elected in the plains districts. By contrast, more male than

female candidates get elected in the mountain districts. The gender gap narrowed in the 2018 election. This gender gap phenomenon may also reflect a combination of factors of the residential distribution of different tribes, ethnic-based voting behaviour, or gender awareness. As most Amis people live in plains districts, and the Amis are also a matriarchal society.

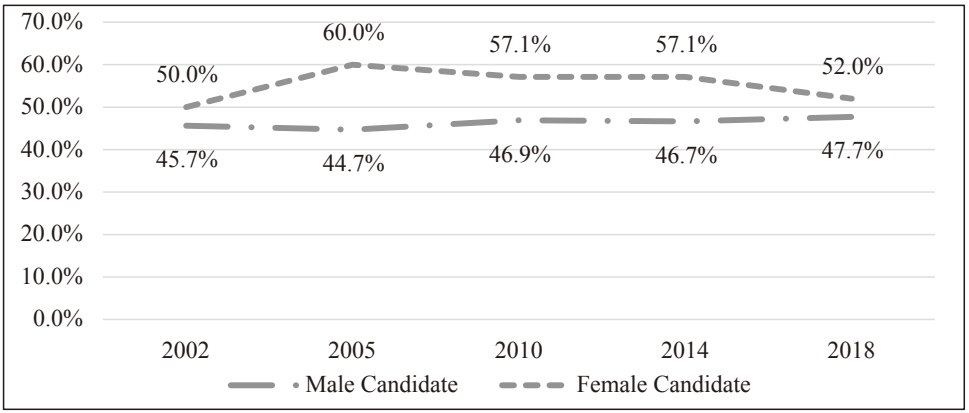

Figure 4. Indigenous Elected Candidates in the Plains Districts By Gender, 2002-2018

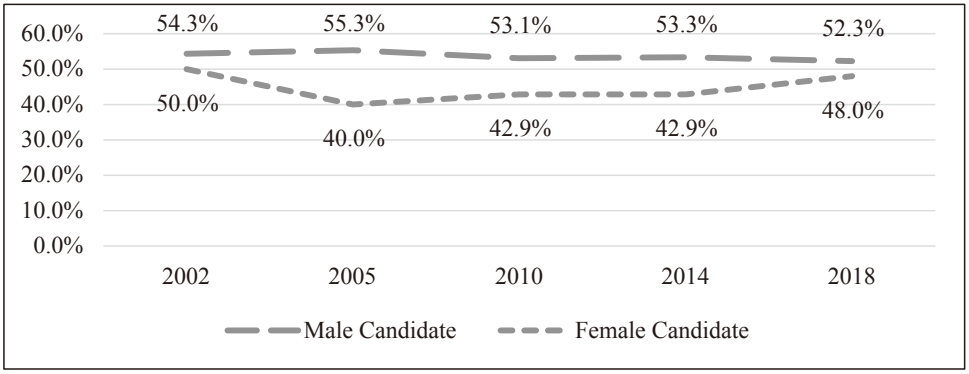

Figure 5. Indigenous Elected Candidates in the Mountains Districts By Gender, 2002-2018

Based on the empirical data, an increasing representation of Indigenous women was found, and more Indigenous female candidates ran for election and

got elected in matriarchal societies. What factors contribute to Indigenous female candidates running for the election and getting elected ?

As noted above, considerable literature exists on female presence in electoral politics. Besides candidates' resources, scholars attempt to understand women's political participation by studying political, political family background and tribes, social and cultural aspects. This paper presents the results roughly based on these aspects in the following section, and it will emphasise more on the factors that differentiate Indigenous female candidates from Han female candidates.

Evidence from interviews: Electoral Systems and Party Affiliation

Like many democratic countries globally, Taiwan has adopted a one-fourth reserved seat system for local council elections since 1999. One seat would be reserved for women when the district's magnitude is four-to-seven-seat. Therefore, two seats would be reserved for women in an eight-to-eleven-seat district. However, there is no requirement to reserve a seat if the district's magnitude is less than four seats. In the meantime, since the local councillor is elected through the SNTV system, which operates in the multimember district, candidates have higher motivation to run for the election. As existing findings pointed out, the SNTV and reserved seat systems incentivised female candidates to stand for elections (Batto et al. 2014; Juang et al. 2018). Unsurprisingly, Indigenous communities or political parties have similar strategies that are likely to nominate female candidates in the districts that qualify for the reserved seat system. As a female candidate running for the 2018 local councillor election, respondent F09 shared her view about the incentives for female candidates to run for the election if there is a female reserved seat system. She mentioned,

> *The real reason lies in the female reserved seats system. This attracted me because I have two opportunities with the female reserved seats*

system. One is to compete with the men here in terms of vote count. If, unfortunately, my vote count doesn't win him, I can still compete with women from other townships. If my vote count is higher than theirs, I still have a chance to get in. So, I think it's a good opportunity. (F09)

Respondent M07 shared his view from the standpoint of the political family on why the family would instead choose a female member to enter politics:

When it comes to the female reserved seat system, whenever a family wants to put someone forward for election, they would rather forgo the men and choose a woman. Yes, because the chances of winning are higher. As a result, large families almost always put forward women for the election due to the reserved seat system. (M07)

The female reserved seats system incentivises women to run for election. However, only 7 out of 69 seats are reserved for Indigenous women, and most of them are multi-district quotas. As Batto (2019) has pointed out that these multi-district quotas are less effective than single-district quotas. The female reserved seats system cannot account for an increasing number of Indigenous female councillors.[8] Does this mean the female reserved seats system cannot attribute to Indigenous women's representation? As mentioned above, the system incentivises female candidates to run the office. This finding was acho with Chung's study in 2019. Chung (2019) indicated that the female reserved seats system has subtly enhanced gender equality, especially in the Atayal society, where male dominance is severe. The electoral system has safeguarded women's rights to participate in politics and has increased their willingness to run for office.

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[8] Only 2 female Indigenous candidates got elected as a result of the reserved seat system after 2001 local council elections.

Besides the electoral system, what are other possible explanations? Political parties offer resources for their candidates to campaign and are likelier to win the elections (Juang et al. 2018). Studies have shown that the KMT has a strong network of organisations in the Indigenous communities, and Indigenous people are more likely to support it (Pao 2011; Pao and Hsieh 2013). However, as social and economic changes and more Indigenous people leave for cities, there are generational differences among the Indigenous communities. For example, respondents F01, F06, F07, and M05 all mentioned, "*Elders usually vote for the KMT candidates*", and M05 further emphasised that "*In the old days, a KMT candidate definitely will get elected*". The elderly are likely to support the KMT; middle-aged and younger people are less likely to be bound by psychological attachment. They tend to value issues and candidates' competence more than party sentiment. Respondents F07, F08, F10, and M03 shared similar views: *"Young voters will also compare the manifestos proposed by the candidates and candidates' images. Young people's voting behaviour is more rational than expressive, while older people are the opposite."*

Hence, experienced politicians can win elections without affiliation to any political party by leveraging their established support base. Party labels may not be an advantage for the election. For example, respondent F09 had run for office many times, but she decided to run for the 2018 election as an independent candidate. She mentioned, "*The KMT had organisation in the past, but its strength in the tribes declined. Being an independent candidate has less burden, and young people usually don't have good feelings toward the political parties"*. In contrast, political newcomers with fewer resources believe that joining a party provides significant advantages, as it offers an excellent channel to mobilise voters to benefit their campaign. Respondent F05 shared, *"As a newcomer in electoral politics, joining a political party has a better chance and greater likelihood of winning an election"*.

Evidence from interviews: Political family Background, Tribes, and Clans

Like Han candidates, Indigenous female dynastic candidates enjoy resources from the family. They are likely to raise more political donations than others, win elections and become incumbents due to inheritance resources from the family (Batto and Read 2024; Feinstein 2010, 574; Smith 2020, 10). Unlike Han districts, however, Indigenous candidates have to try hard to search for potential voters, especially in the plains districts. This is because the Indigenous electoral district is larger in area than the general district. Unlike the Indigenous district, Han candidates only campaign for voters within a divided area. Taking Taipei City as an example, there are six general districts, with only one Plains Indigenous district and one Mountain Indigenous district. As an Indigenous candidate, he or she has to run a campaign in Taipei City. Most of the time, candidates don't know where their voters live, especially in a more urbanised district. A dynastic candidate or incumbent enjoys the advantage of having a voter list so that they can approach voters more easily (Jian 2023, 69). During interviews, respondents F04 and M01 shared their observations that "*Incumbent or dynastic candidates have a voter list so that they know where are the Indigenous people. They enjoy the advantages of knowing each Indigenous family member well and estimating potential votes accurately*."

In particular, the campaign strategies for Indigenous candidates are emphasised more one by one, door-to-door, seeing voters in person and talking to them. Thus, Indigenous candidates' campaigns largely depend on family ties, clan politics, and personal support organisations. Establishing a personal network through clans makes it easier for an Indigenous candidate to know where voters are. As such, it costs Indigenous candidates more time, transportation, and effort than their Han counterparts to approach voters. Since the number of eligible voters is smaller in the Indigenous district, each vote does count. Thus, Indigenous can-

didates need to know how and where to reach voters. Most respondents shared similar experiences: "*In a campaign, you must see voters in person. You have to walk into their life. They may be wary of you at first. Once you visit them several times, they will open the door for you, although they may not vote for you. You have to rely on relatives to introduce voters to you. One family by one family"*. As mentioned, female candidates' feminine advantages help them walk into voters' houses and increase the chance of gathering support.

Scholars have indicated that kinship and clan politics are important in Indigenous people's elections. Indigenous voters tend to vote for candidates with the same tribes. (Pao and Hsieh 2013; Pao and Chou 2019). *"Of course, relatives vote for relatives" (F07), "The candidate is from my village, so I must vote for him or her" (F04)*. Indigenous voters tend to support candidates who are either relatives or from the same clan. This is mainly found in the tribes in mountain districts. For example, Respondent M01 indicated that "*Relatives network is more important in the tribes than city areas. A candidate cannot win an election if he or she does not have support from the clan*". Respondent F16 shared her experience, *"During the campaign, there is such a saying that a candidate might easily get elected because he or she comes from a big family."*

Thus, if a candidate can cross between two or more tribes. For example, through marriage between Paiwan and Kavalan, the candidate can get support from these two tribes. However, if a candidate marries the Han people, he or she loses sources of votes from the in-laws sides since Han people are unable to vote for them. It is not surprising, then, that candidates often use their family connections to approach voters and introduce themselves come from which tribe to build closer relationships with voters during canvassing.

Furthermore, some female candidates shared their campaign strategies, which included calculating the number of voters from different Indigenous ethnic groups within their electoral districts. They also calculate the votes and estimate how many base votes they can secure. Respondent F06, a first-time candi-

date, failed to win the election. She expressed surprise at the outcome, as she had been very confident due to coming from a large family. This further confirms that Indigenous voters cast their votes based on their tribal background, but this may not always be the case!

Traditionally, the social organisation of Indigenous people is led by the elderly or nobles. Amis, for example, is based on an age-grade system. At the same time, Paiwan's society is based on nobility (Hsieh 2017, 25).[9] Since family and kinship play an essential role for Indigenous candidates, seeking agreement from the leaders or the elderly in the tribes will be the first step for Indigenous people who want to stand for elections. If a candidate comes from a large family and wins endorsement from the elderly or leaders, the campaign will be easier. Usually, the elderly or leaders will select a male candidate instead of a female. Therefore, it is hard to see women candidates in the Indigenous elections in the early days.

> *The elderly will get together and make decisions by consensus. Once they have decided who will be the candidate, the whole family has to unify to support him. They are very traditional. So, you will not see a female candidate.* (M01)

> *If there is no support from the leaders, the campaign will be very difficult.* (M04)

However, tribes also lead to some differences. Amis is a matriarchal society, while Bunun is a patriarchal society. Our data from interviews support the empirical results that patriarchal tribes are more hesitant to support a female candidate. Respondents F09, F13, and M01 stated similar views on females' cir-

[9] The Paiwan tribe has four classes: mamazangilan, nobles, warriors, and commoners.

cumstances to get involved in electoral politics in patriarchal or matriarchal societies.

> *Bunun is a patriarchal society. They value men over women. Men should take responsibility in public affairs, so women take on the secondary role.* (F09)

> *The Amis are a matriarchal society, where women have a better status, more advantages, and greater acceptance in women's candidacy.* (F13)

> *If you look at electoral districts of the Atayal people, you can hardly find female candidates. This is because they hold very traditional views—women are expected to stay home, take care of the family, and raise children, while men go out and work hard. And this isn't just in politics; it's the same in regular jobs. But where can you see more women councillors? Among the Amis and Paiwan people!* (M01)

Respondents M02 and M04 shared that "*while the class system is gradually eroding in the Indigenous society, the influence of tribes' leaders is declining together with more and more gender equity values being accepted, the family-based clan no longer insists that only males can be the candidates*." Once more and more women are present in politics, they prove women can do well as representatives like men. Thus, more and more capable women have the opportunity to stand for candidacy. Respondent F02 is a young and first-time candidate. She shared her campaign experience by saying, *"Even in those early days, many women were already participating in politics and breaking through to become councillors, township chiefs, and township representatives. This made everyone realise that women can do these jobs"*. Furthermore, respondent F07 and F08 shared similar views, attributing their successful election outcomes to their good

political performances and effective constituency services once elected.

Although values and social structure have gradually changed, traditional norms still persist. This is mainly of tribe meetings, traditional festivals, or rituals where women cannot participate. Many taboos among Indigenous people are related to gender. While social boundaries are relatively easier to cross, gender boundaries are much more difficult. If a female politician tries to force her way in, she must bear the blame for destroying traditions. By recognising this, Indigenous women still encounter fewer opportunities in public affairs. Several respondents expressed that female politicians normally respect traditions, which leads to fewer opportunities for them to interact with voters.

> *Traditional festivals are men only. Female politicians usually respect traditions. They will not forcibly participate.* (F08)

> *When it comes to the Amis tribe, traditionally, women are not allowed to participate in tribe politics. I have experienced many instances where women were not permitted to be involved. Even though I am now a politician, I still adhere to those boundaries.* (F03)

> *There are a lot of traditional rituals in which female Amis are not allowed to participate. For example, a fishing festival.* (M04)

Evidence from interviews: Social Structure and Cultural Factor

As mentioned earlier, many Indigenous tribes are patriarchal societies, and several respondents also shared similar observations, especially in the mountain tribes. Accompanied by the development of technology and the internet, increasing educational attainment, and the gender equality movement, however, the traditional views on sex-role gradually weakened. This is mainly found in more

urbanised areas, and thus, it can be expected that an Indigenous female candidate will have a better chance of winning the election. The empirical results show that more female than male candidates get elected in the plains districts. Interview data provides further support and accounts.

> *In the past, the society held a value that women stay at home and take care of the children and family. The social structure limits the opportunity for women to get involved in public affairs.* (M03)

> *Gender stereotypes are weaker in metropolitan areas; this is good for young Indigenous women to stand for candidacy.* (F01)

> *Society is still gender inequality. The sex-role stereotype is still there. I encountered a lot of questioning during the campaign because I am a female. Voters don't think a female can be decisive.* (F05)

Cultural barriers are important in explaining women's presence in electoral politics (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Given the patriarchal nature of Indigenous society, it is anticipated that female candidates may still encounter discrimination based on gender during campaigns, despite the acknowledgement of a more gender-egalitarian culture nowadays. Several respondents expressed their uncomfortable experiences while meeting with voters who hold a traditional view of the gender-biased division of work and asked female candidates to stay home to perform parenting obligations.

> *I have three children, and elderly voters told me that you should stay at home and take care of your children.* (F08)

> *I don't think females will do better than males!* (F04)

Are we out of men? Are we out of men? How did you come out to run? (F09)

When I first ran for office, my in-laws believed that men were more suitable for politics and should be the ones making decisions in public affairs. They thought women were not fit to be public figures and that it was inappropriate for women to be in the spotlight. (F14)

Even encountering gender discrimination during elections, several respondents indicated that the advantages of femininity help Indigenous women to gather support during campaigns. As respondent F05 described Indigenous people value human affection. *"As long as you visit voters several times, they finally will open the door for you and talk to you."* And women are seen as more caring and careful, easy-going, and softer; this helps them easier to assimilate into the Indigenous community and get acceptance from Indigenous voters. Most respondents shared experiences that "*the characteristics of women candidates are attention and affinity. They are softer than their male counterparts. Being attentive and affinity, Indigenous female candidates are easier to be accepted by Indigenous voters*".

Many Indigenous people are religious, either Catholic or Protestant. Religions are part of Indigenous people's daily lives. It is important for Indigenous candidates to participate in or get involved with churches' activities to expand votes, especially on important religious holidays. Indigenous candidates expressed that they will try to attend Church celebrations or make donations as much as possible. Respondent M04 mentioned, "*Each Indigenous candidate will try very hard to gain support from the Church. By participating in Church activities or donating to the Church to build a connection. There will be votes in return"*. Respondent F13 from the Plains district shared that her regular Church visits contributed to her gaining votes.

Showing up on each occasion means a presence and interpersonal connection. Non-Catholic or non-Christian Indigenous candidates will encounter great difficulties in running for elections. For example, respondent F12 used to be a politician's assistant; she is a non-Christian and analysed that she lost more than half of the support due to religious reasons. In particular, as mentioned above, each vote does count in the Indigenous constituency. Since many priests or pastors come from the local Indigenous community, villagers trust them immensely. Therefore, priests or pastors may influence Indigenous peoples' vote choice informally. For example, Respondent F05 shared: *"Each (Christian) Church has a pastor and his wife, people trust them. If the pastor or his wife has a preference for a candidate, people are easily influenced by them*". Respondents F04 and F09 had similar opinions, "*The influence of the Church cannot be ignored. It will be a disadvantage for non-religious candidates"*.

In the tribes, elderly people tend to speak in their tribal language. Language shortens the distance between people and creates a sense of belonging. An Indigenous candidate who can speak his or her tribal language will have an advantage in campaigns. This is especially the case in rural constituencies and interactions with older people.

> *In rural areas, most of the population consists of elderly people, and one thing they particularly appreciate is when you can speak native language—it earns you extra points. Many elders feel this way. For example, older people tend to like it when you speak their language. So, how do you move them emotionally? Speaking their native language is crucial! At first, they might just listen when they see me for the first time. The second time, they stand up. By the third time, it turns into a warm embrace.* (F07)

> *During an election campaign, speaking the native language is very important because it creates a sense of closeness. For example, if you speak Taiwanese, would you prefer people to speak to you in Taiwanese or only in Mandarin?* (F15)

> *Of course! When I go out to ask for votes, even if there are people I don't know, they are often surprised the moment they hear me speak their native language. To them, it's unexpected and special that I can still speak it—and with such a strong accent too! That really makes them happy, you know? It creates a sense of closeness.* (F12)

Women candidates are seen as being more patient and caring. If they can speak their tribal tongue, it is easier for them than male candidates to be closer to the elderly. The elderly people will think women candidates are more likeable. As respondents, F05 and F08 shared, "*Having approachable or accessible characteristics may not be important in Han people's elections, but it is essential in the Indigenous districts. It is the key for an Indigenous candidate to walk into Indigenous people's lives. Female Indigenous candidates display such characteristics more than males."*

Account for an Increasing Women's Political Representation

Traditional attitudes about the role of women and discrimination against women can still be found in Indigenous society. However, as the traditional class system gradually loses influence, women who wish to run for office may no longer need to consult with traditional leaders. Meanwhile, more and more examples show that the elderly class is willing to support a female candidate to represent the clan in elections. Why does the head of the clan (elderly class) support a female candidate?

Chiang (2011, 185) focused on the Han people's elections and indicated that "kinship and geographical factors" have continued influencing Taiwanese women's political career chances. A female candidate typically enters the pool and runs in the election when a male candidate is unavailable or unwilling to stand for election. The findings also apply to the Indigenous people's elections. During the interviews, several respondents shared their own experiences or observations that the absence of men is attributed to women's presence in electoral politics.

> *Family members assume my husband or brother-in-law should run for the candidacy, not me. Members of the clan think they are stronger than me. Since my husband's job is not in my constituency, he persuaded the clan that I would have more personal networks than him. I will have more chances to win the election. That's why I got to run for the candidacy.* (F04)

> *My husband and brother-in-law cannot stand for the elections. In that situation, I am the only one who can do it.* (F08)

With fewer hindrances from the clan, women have more opportunities to participate in electoral politics. Once Indigenous women get elected, the incumbency effects contribute to their re-election. Several respondents also mentioned that Indigenous women, such as township councillors, usually start by running or holding office at a lower level. Once more and more female representatives are found among the locals, together with the rise of the gender equality movement since the 1990s. For many Indigenous people, *"it is normal to have female politicians, and they are also doing a good job"* (M02, M04). As mentioned before, respondent F14 did not get support from in-laws for her first election, but she shared, "*Women are more detail-oriented, while men tend to focus on the bigger picture and are often rougher with the finer details. Women start with small tasks*

and do them well before tackling bigger issues. So voters feel that having a female representative performs well is not a bad choice." Female politicians bring more positive images for themselves. In return, female presence in elections encourages more women to participate in politics.

Both social and political approaches account for female representation in Indigenous councillor elections. On the one hand, the female reserved seats system provides incentives and opportunities encouraging women to run for office, enabling them to demonstrate their abilities and performance with existing examples. On the other hand, this is advantageous in changing stereotypical impressions regarding women's participation in public domains, further promoting more women to run for and even win elections. These efforts are complemented by heightened gender consciousness within Indigenous communities, cases where tribe elders agreed to put women as candidates to run for office, and proactive mobilisation strategies that leverage female characteristics beneficial to Indigenous electoral engagement.

Conclusion

This paper aims to answer the question of what important factors shape Indigenous women's access to political office. Due to the delineation of Indigenous electoral districts, the mobilisation for Indigenous elections significantly differs from that in general districts. Indigenous candidates must use an outreach strategy to find out where the voters are and visit them individually. Female Indigenous candidates' feminine advantages help them gain access to voters' homes, increasing their chances of securing votes.

Furthermore, getting support from the clan is essential for Indigenous candidates in the elections. Indigenous candidates from a larger clan family have higher chances of getting elected. This is especially true if a candidate can cross

between two or more tribes. For example, through marriage between Paiwan and Kavalan, the candidate can get support from these two tribes. Thus, clan and tribe politics highlight the features of the Indigenous elections. As the social structure and gender consciousness in the tribes have gradually changed, traditional leaders are more likely to accept women as candidates, either due to the absence of men, the female reserved seat system, or the better qualifications of the women. Thus, this gives women more opportunities to run for office and, in return, gradually changes gender perceptions. Nevertheless, there are still some activities that female Indigenous candidates cannot participate in and lose chances to present themselves.

According to statistics in 1982, the majority of Indigenous people were religious. They are either Catholic or Protestant (Zhan 2019, 265). The church plays a vital role in Indigenous people's daily life. An Indigenous candidate who can keep a good connection with the church contributes to his or her votes. Indeed, a non-religious candidate suffers a disadvantage in getting support from churchgoers.

Based on the gender inequality index (GII) criteria introduced by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in 2010, Taiwan ranked first in Asia and sixth worldwide in gender equality in 2022.[10] This is mainly due to a higher female representation in politics. In addition, the Legislature Yuan in Taiwan passed the enforcement act of "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)" in May 2011, which became active in January 2012. With the changing social structure and the development of gender equality, the electoral environment is more friendly to female Indigenous candidates than before. Furthermore, the female reserved system incentivises more

[10] See news from *Taipei Times* "Taiwan No. 1 in Asia, World No. 6 for Gender Equality" https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2021/01/09/2003750242 (accessed April 23, 2022)

women to run for office, which helps to bring more female Indigenous people to run for elections. The increase in Indigenous female representation can be attributed to both the quota system and the empowerment process.

Finally, it is important to note that over 38 per cent of Indigenous districts have only male candidates running for office both in 2018 and 2022 local councillor elections. This means that more than one-third of these districts are entirely represented by men. While it is encouraging to see an increase in female Indigenous representation over the past decade, further research is needed to understand why no women run for office in certain districts. Are reforms needed in the electoral system to ensure more women's voices are included in the policy-making process? This is a question worth further discussion and exploration.

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Appendix

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Appendix Table 1: The District Magnitude and Reserved Female Seats for the 2018 Municipality and County/City Indigenous Councilor Elections.

Appendix Table 2: Interviewees' Backgrounds.

* *Journal of Electoral Studies* official website: https://jestw.nccu.edu.tw/

選舉動員與性別：影響女性原住民縣市議員候選人參選因素之探討

林瓊珠*

《本文摘要》

無論是一般漢人選區或是原住民選區，女性當選縣市議員的比例日益成長。儘管兩個群體在競選過程中面臨相似的挑戰，但也存在明顯的差異。本探索性研究聚焦於探討影響女性原住民縣市議員候選人參選的重要因素。本文以深度訪談法蒐集資料，主要關注原住民女性候選人被甄補參選的過程、競選期間面對的社會結構與文化的阻礙與機會，以及她們對女性參與選舉的看法。本研究發現，相較於漢人選區的婦女保障名額制度，在原住民選區中該制度效果相對有限，其效果主要在提供參選的誘因。傳統習俗雖限制女性候選人參與部分傳統節慶活動的機會，但來自宗族的阻礙的減少，也使得女性更有機會參選，若能獲得宗族支持，更有機會贏得選舉。同時，原住民選區的競選採取的是社區動員策略，需積極的一票一票去拜會選民，教會也是重要的競選場合，若爲非基督徒的候選人，減少了能夠接觸選民的機會，而能夠講族語對拓展選民的支持基礎也有助益。

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整體而言，宗族與部落政治形塑了原住民選舉的獨特樣貌，這也使其與漢人選舉呈現出顯著的不同。

關鍵詞：原住民女性候選人、婦女保障名額制度、競選動員、宗族與部落政治、性別

Appendix

Table 1 The District Magnitude and Reserved Female Seats for the 2018 Municipality and County/City Indigenous Councilor Elections

City/County	Constituency	DM	Reserved Female Seat	Notes	
Taipei City	7	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	8	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
New Taipei City	11	3	0	Plains Constituency	
	12	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Taoyuan City	13	4	1	Plains Constituency	
	14	3	0	Mountain Constituency	
Taichung City	15	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	16	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	17	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Tainan City	12	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	13	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Kaohsiung City	12	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	13	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	14	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	15	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Hsinchu County	11	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	12	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	13	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Miaoli County	7	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	8	1	0	Mountain Constituency	

City/County	Constituency	DM	Reserved Female Seat	Notes	
Changhua County	9	1	0	Plains Constituency	
Nantou County	6	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	7	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	8	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Chiayi County	7	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Pingtung County	8	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	9	1	0	Mountain Constituency	2 Reserved female seats
	10	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	11	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	12	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	13	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	14	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	15	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	16	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Yilan County	11	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	12	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	13	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Hualien County	5	3	0	Plains Constituency	
	6	2	0	Plains Constituency	1 Reserved female seat
	7	2	0	Plains Constituency	
	8	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	9	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	10	1	0	Mountain Constituency	

City/County	Constituency	DM	Reserved Female Seat	Notes	
Taitung County	7	3	0	Plains Constituency	2 Reserved female seats
	8	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	9	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	10	1	0	Plains Constituency	
	11	2	0	Plains Constituency	
	12	1	0	Mountain Constituency	1 Reserved female seat
	13	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	14	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	15	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
	16	1	0	Mountain Constituency	
Keelung City	8	1	0	Plains Constituency	
Hsinchu City	6	1	0	Plains Constituency	

Table 2. Interviewees' Backgrounds

ID	District	Tribe	Date of interview
F01	Plains	Amis	2021/10/15
F02	Plains	Amis	2021/10/22
F03	Plains	Amis	2021/10/22
F04	Plains	Amis	2021/12/14
F05	Mountain	Atayal	2022/01/04
F06	Plains	Amis	2022/01/15
F07	Plains	Amis	2022/01/24
F08	Mountain	Bunun	2022/01/24
F09	Mountain	Bunun	2022/01/25
F10	Mountain	Paiwan	2022/02/22
F11	Mountain	Atayal	2022/03/22
F12	Mountain	Bunun	2022/06/21
F13	Plains	Amis	2022/06/25
F14	Plains	Amis	2022/09/02
F15	Plains	Amis	2022/09/16
F16	Party Staff	-	2022/12/12
F17	Plains	Puyuma	2022/12/26
M01	Mountain	Atayal	2022/01/07
M02	Party Staff	-	2022/01/14
M03	Party Staff	-	2022/01/14
M04	Local Affairs Expert	-	2022/01/15
M05	Party Staff	-	2022/02/14
M06	Party Staff	-	2022/07/05
M07	Local Affairs Expert	-	2023/01/09

Notes: -- indicates no data or not applicable.