While Formosan languages like Paiwan and Atayal do not exhibit overt determiners, they have overt case markers. In these languages, regardless of whether such markers are obligatorily required or are inherently marked with referential features, the presence of empty DP may be allowed in subject position. By comparing with some relevant facts in other languages like Chamorro, Chinese and English, it is shown in this paper that functional categories like case markers may license nominal subjects with empty determiners (cf. Longobardi 1994). In addition, for human or non-human nouns, Paiwan has two kinds of case markers, each marked with distinct referential features (cf. Huang et al. 1998 and Chuang 2002).

Key words: case marking, reference, determiner, empty category, noun phrase structure