

creative person (infantilism, inner conflict by the psyche) are, in fact, a downside of the perfect unity of their identity constructed during the process of inspiration. So if creative integration of mentality represents “the health equivalent”, we can see the opposite picture analyzing for example painting of the patients suffering schizophrenia with impaired perception of self as a whole.

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**TRANSFORMATIONS OF BODY / SOUL  
AND SHAMANS' POWER:  
KISAIZ SHAMANIC INITIATION  
AMONG THE KAVALAN OF TAIWAN**

Since the 1970s “Body and Soul” has been the focus in interdisciplinary studies of shamanism (*Eliade* 1968, *Lewis* 1971, *Goodman* 1986, *Perrin* 1987). The body is a kind of basic analytical dual ideal, including soul or spirits. The soul can ascend to the sky or descend to hell (trance or ecstasy), or spirits incorporate into body (possession). Scholars attaching importance to body changes very rarely analyze it in the context of shaman power and social status. In a vast range of cultural practices body and soul/spirits have a large number of different forms of expression and interpretations of connections. Through the analysis of the initiation of a *mtiu* among the Kavalan of Taiwan this paper will examine how an individual’s body is defined as a “shaman” and to what extent “the shamanic body” can become a means for the (re)construction of social relationships. This paper will also question the shamanic initiation ritual *kisaiz* in order to understand what special powers is the shaman given during the performing of “death” (*pahte*, falling unconscious) symbolizing the soul leaving the body. Finally, it will explain what different forms of social power conversion are involved in the “passage” of this shaman/non-shaman social status and body/soul into different states in the process?

The Austronesian-speaking Kavalan arrived on the northeast coast of Taiwan 1000-2000 years ago (*Toichi Mabuchi* 1931, *Liu Yichang* 1993) and gradually moved from different locations onto the Yilan Plain. The etymology of the name Kavalan is “people who live on the plain”, distinguishing themselves from the mountain-dwelling and headhunting Atayal tribe. The Han Chinese settled in large num-

bers and cultivated rice from the end of the 1700s and then came the Japanese who were the colonial rulers of Taiwan for 50 years from 1895. After over 200 years of assimilation by the Han, forced relocation and the Japanization policy, the identity, language and culture of the Kavalan was placed under immense pressure and almost disappeared.

Only when the people of the last Kavalan settlement in eastern Taiwan, PatoRogan<sup>1</sup> village in Hualien County, launched a campaign in 1987 for the ethnic group to be recognized as one of Taiwan's indigenous peoples did ethnic consciousness begin to gradually reform. After Christians missionaries became active in the late 1950 the holding of grand *kisaiz* ritual ceased. However, in the process of campaign for government recognition shamanism showed signs of a limited revival. During 1995-1996 two young girls became shaman after the holding of a simplified ritual. In 2002, the Kavalan were officially recognized by the government as an indigenous people. Today, the group numbers around 1100 people. The village where I carried out most of the field work, PatoRogan, constitutes about one third of this total population. Today the village still has quite a large number of *mtiu*, ten in all, aged between 50-80. One of the two girls who underwent the initiation ritual in the mid 1990s has died. while the other no longer takes part in shaman activities. The ethnography in this paper is based mainly on interviews with shamans about their lives narratives and my participant observation of rituals and their reestablished theatre performances during the 1993-2009.

***Significant body of shamanic calling:  
female, menstruation and nonsexual experience***

Generally speaking, in any society where there are shamanic practices, the role of a shaman is accomplished by men, even in a matriarchal society, such as that of the Athoposcan and Nabesna in Alaska, North America (*Guédon* 2005). In some patriarchal societies, women can become shamans through special initiation rituals, as among the aboriginal tribes of the forests of Siberia, or Baruya in Papua New Guinea. But female shamans are almost always inferior to male shamans (*Hamayon* 1990, *Godelier* 1982). Women are usually excluded from hunting and warfare, and have no access to weapons and certain tools. This is due to the fact that women are related to fertility whereas men are related to killing and the two are

not compatible (*Oosten* 1989). In many societies the stewardship of the shamans is the result of the categorization of gender distinct body and differentiation of economic/productive activities, the opposing female/male body and life/death become a matter of social gender.

Kavalan practiced matrilineal and matrilocal rules until the 1970s. However, to this day their shamanic ministry is still under the control of women. Among the Kavalan only women can become a *mtiu* (shaman) and in the 1950s there were as many as twenty *mtiu*. It is indeed rare to find a society in which female shamans have organized themselves in such a way and formed a female community. In interviews every *mtiu* said that between the ages of 8 and 15, while they were still virgins, they underwent the *kisaiz* initiation ritual in their homes. The criteria of *mtiu* are sex, age and sexuality: female, young and non-sexual experience. 1/3 of the girls in the village could possibly be chosen. The *kisaiz* is like a coming of age ritual in which girls become adults. In fact those most likely to be chosen are girls who are about to experience their first period. When a girl is going through the physical changes associated with puberty, notably her first menstruation, the Kavalan associate this experience with contact from another world, and especially with the goddess Mutumazu. Girls who are about to be fertile are the future representatives and descendants of the goddess. This interpretation translates a maternal relationship between an imagined other world and a *mtiu*. This differs greatly from shamans in the Siberian forest who construct an intimate wife-husband relation. Furthermore, in Kavalan mythology, Mutumazu's son, who represented the first of the Kavalan people, was killed. Thus for them young initiates who are to become a *mtiu* invoke the name of the goddess so they can be cured, stay healthy and also be granted offspring. In short, Kavalan shamanism is related to reproduction.

#### ***Manifestation of the body: illness and dreams***

Another bodily way of shamanic selection is through *tagau* (illness) and *Raputuy* (dreams). In *mtiu*'s life narratives, they often say they were in pain all over their body, couldn't walk, couldn't hear, had a headache, that one part of their body was swollen or they felt anxious. That is, they mentioned when they felt a vague feeling of *tagau* ("physical pain", "discomfort", "listlessness" or "unease") for a length of time, or the individual felt they faced a body-crisis/

life-crisis or was perhaps in a conflict situation and felt the need to change or protest by leaving behind a certain state. In search of a solution or a way of changing, their mother or grandmother went to ask a *mtiu* to do *subli* (divination). If the result of divination was that a *kisaiz* initiation ritual needed to be held to recover, this *tagau* was a sign that the sufferer had been chosen by the goddess. The symptoms of her illness were not necessarily spectacular or a fixed prototype and anyone might suffer from similar symptoms, therefore the shamanic body was not decided by *tagau* type or symptoms, but by the cause identified by the senior shaman through divination.

Possible selection is also through dreams. For the Kavalan dreams are messages from another world and everyone can use them to predict the future. Dream is *tazusa* (meaning “second person” in Kavalan language, referring to the soul), the result of a temporary departure from the body and connecting with another world. But when the contents of the dream involve more than the dreamer, only certain qualified persons can properly interpret them. Ordinary people have ordinary dreams. Those who have ‘strange’ dreams in which the other world is shown receive a calling to be a *mtiu*. There are certain types: ghosts resembling infants, a certain woman ancestor or a dead *mtiu*. A *mtiu*’s dream has more significance than that of an ordinary person because they see things invisible to others. Moreover, people consider that a *mtiu* has the ability to understand, communicate and foresee the other world. This is her primary work. In different cultures this is ability that shaman are usually expected to have (Perrin 1992).

A *mtiu*’s dream, in addition to divine revelation, also includes a mother-son or mother-daughter relationship. It involves dreaming of children, of female ancestors or of deceased *mtiu*. This phenomenon translates into the importance of the *mtiu*’s blood links (whether real or imagined) and a maternal relationship between an imagined other world and a *mtiu*. This differs from shamans in the Siberian forest who dream of intimate relations between men and women. Siberian shamans are considered as a male companion to the daughter of forest spirits (Hamayon 1990).

#### ***Fitting into order: Food, behaviour and sexuality***

Through the selection of the aforementioned objective or subjective physical conditions, during the period of the *kisaiz* the food

and drink, behaviour and sexuality of girls are deliberately fitted gradually into a particular order different from the ordinary social order. These deviations attest to a calling and to a distinction conferred upon the individual by the other world.

After autumn harvest every year around the ninth month of the lunar calendar, a family that needs to hold a *kisaiz* for a daughter or granddaughter must first prepare enough new harvest rice and mobilize enough *lepaw* (family) and *qanasuani* (lineage) to maintain the week-long *kisaiz* ritual, like the Kwakiutl in British Columbia, Canada, who hold the shaman initiation ritual at the same time as the *potlatch* festival (*Bouteiller* 1950: 69). In Kavalan society the new rice harvest festival and the *kisaiz* shaman initiation ritual are also held at the same time. This shows us that in Kavalan society the social role of *mtiu*, the related public display and legitimacy of her power are closely connected to the production, allocation and consumption of rice. This economic production mainly in the form of rice becomes a kind of social order and is emphasized in the *kisaiz* through the *mtiu*'s food and drink taboos.

The initiate has to strictly obey the *prisin* (taboos) of *manmet* during the *kisaiz*. *Manmet* means that the traditional way of ancestral living must be followed. There are two kinds of food and drink taboo, one requires that certain kinds of food must be eaten and the other dictates that some must not be eaten. The taboos are connected to the mystical creator goddess and, like staging a performance that has the words of the goddess as the script, is a kind of symbolic practice. In the creation myth of the Kavalan rice is the food that prevents people starving and is sacred. During the *kisaiz* period the initiate must eat rice foods and can even only drink water that has been used to wash rice. For the Kavalan, by emphasizing the eating of rice the initiate's body will achieve a symbolic effect and become more powerful.

Furthermore, Mutumazu, the creator goddess in Kavalan mythology, taught the people to grow rice and this was why the people could survive. Starvation means that a person lacks what is needed to make a basic living or survive (*F.M. Lappé & J. Collins* 1982) and is a clear sign of powerlessness. Overcoming starvation is an expression of power so the goddess is very powerful. During the *kisaiz*, as

well as eating rice, the initiate gives away *nuzun* (rice cake) to participants at the end, playing the giver role of the goddess by sharing a rice-based food, establishing a consubstantial connection with Mutumazu, publicly legitimizing her social role as a *mtiu* and becoming the inheritor or agent of the powerful goddess. Through the use of rice, in the *kisaiz*, the *mtiu*'s body is empowered, fitting into shamanic order, an order that is closely connected to rice cultivation.

***A body that can pass through time and space***

Other food related taboos: in the initiate's home she has to use a separate stove and is strictly forbidden from using salt, instead having to use sea water. In addition, initiates are forbidden from eating "unclean" foods like fish, domestic pigs, chickens, spring onions and Chinese chives. These domestic animals are vegetables that were introduced by outsiders or strongly flavored form a special category of taboo food. Wild mountain animals and vegetables can be eaten. If, during the ritual period, these foods are eaten sneakily, the Kavalan believe that the initiate's body will *tagau* and in serious case will die or will threaten the safety of their family.

Also, this food taboo can be understood from the angle of behavior limitations. During the ritual period, apart from the *paspaw* (offering) worship dancing and singing done with senior *mtiu*, the initiate is not allowed to walk around, she also cannot talk with others and has to sit obediently in a fixed chair, with white cloth on their head and her feet on bamboo mat (or white cloth), ensuring that her feet don't touch the ground. When she wants to eat or go to the toilet she must be carried by a person who strictly follows the *manmet* to avoid the body coming into contact with the ground that symbolizes the human world. She also has to be segregated from her family when she sleeps (sleeping alone) and avoid engaging in sexual activity. Because the initiate has to follow so many behavioral taboos their every movement is very different to the bustling scene created by their family and friends who are taking part in the ritual, creating a deliberately separate sacred space.

Moreover, the separate cooking of foods, ban on eating certain foods, the new *mtiu* being prevented from treading on the ground, and the symbolic segregation of the initiate when sleeping, etc. are actions that have meaning in terms of delineation of space and also represent a kind of symbolic time label. For example, the use of sea

water in place of salt expresses that the new *mtiu* lives in the time of ancient ancestors and goddess' mythology. The whole ritual shows the daily life of the initiated in a different goddess' world. This kind of conscious separation, seen from the angle of Arnold Van Gennep (1981[1909]) and V. Turner's (1969: 94-97) "ritual of passage" analytical concept is a kind of separation before the conversion of identity or state. In separation, this performing body that has entered a kind of order can move between different times and spaces, producing a dual effect Foucault (1984) called heterochrony and heterotopia, making the main player to gradually connect with many others: for example, goddess, ancestral spirits and past shaman. To the Kavalan all the people who have had a similar or shared the same experience (including, living people, the dead and gods) will, through "participation mystique" (*Lévy-Bruhl* 1960[1925]), in which they go beyond time and space to be together, establish a kind of supporting band connection so that new members will symbolically gain/experience the help of these gods.

This "show" at the same time also involves complex process of the inter-crossing of subject (new shaman) and object (gods) that allows the shaman's status and authority to be recognized by the people, while also having a monopoly over special ritual performances, for example learning prayers that are powerful and can communicate with the gods and flora and fauna related knowledge and song and dance training, controlling the important symbols in these rituals, further legitimizing her symbolic power. After this kind of ritual performance the goddess and gods become the source of her power and authority. Simultaneously, she becomes the agent of the gods in the human world and opens the path of communication between two worlds. Once again it (re)defines the *mtiu*'s role as a mediator between people and the gods (*Eliade* 1968). The new shaman uses this action to open up a channel for communication between the people and the gods, describing the start of the re-establishment of the relationship between people and the gods while, in this performance situation, re-defining the meaning of "becoming a shaman" in Kavalan society.

#### ***Experiencing death:***

#### ***The separation and rejoining of Body and Soul***

In the eyes of the Kavalan, as well the initiate's body being "in

the world of the gods” what other symbolic meaning does she have? According to senior shaman Api<sup>2</sup>, initiates are “performing” a state of *patai* (death) or, by obeying taboos (drama performance) experiencing death. When Mutumazu, the goddess who in mythology makes shaman sick and also taught the Kavalan how to do the *kisaiz*, died and was buried. Her family heard song emanating from her grave. They exhumed her and saw that she was doing a *kisaiz* in a standard posture. They then placed a bamboo mat on the ground so she could be reborn and come back to earth, teaching people the *kisaiz* song and dance to help people treat disease. For the Kavalan that’s the reason why the new *mtiu* cannot tread on the ground during the ritual. She is in another world to learn *kisaiz*, and then she can help treat people’s illness. In accordance with the explanation of the shaman Api, during the *kisaiz* the new *mtiu* enters what Turner called state of “death,” liminality, and plays the role of the goddess Mutumazu in mythology, achieving *communitas* with the goddess and this is why she is given the name of the goddess during the initial ritual period.

A part of the song and dance of the *kisaiz* also expresses death. The senior *mtiu* use *baRden* (leaves) to make offerings of wine and will call the goddess Mutumazu and her husband Siagnau and deceased shaman in song. Then the older and relatively experience *mtiu* will take shiny silk spider’s web-like *saray* (silk thread, *ka-saray*) that is usually invisible to ordinary people from the goddess. Then these *saray* will symbolically pass through the initiate’s body and be entwined around her. Then the shaman will run fast as if they have entered the world of the gods, until they can no longer walk because their hands and feet are “bound” by the *saray*. The initiate will then *pahte* (faint), seeming to have lost consciousness, entering a special trance state. To the Kavalan this shows that the *tazusa* (soul) of the initiate has left the body and has reached the place where the goddess is. The dramatic effects of the ritual serve to compress time-space, making the watching people of the tribe believe that the goddess/gods are really present in front of them, also allowing them to understand that the goddess can make a person sick or die (faint) at will and that people have no choice in the matter.

Senior shamans explained that these actions are very dangerous and entail the performing of the role of the goddess Mutumazu

and her husband Siagnau in front of the parade. They perform *kasaray*, which is both mentally tiring and dangerous. These two people must not *pahte* (faint) because they are the only ones who are able to engage in a tug of war with the gods' world and successfully call back the spirit of the new shaman *tazusa* that has already reached the gods' place. If this new *mtiu*, whose power is still weak, is reluctant to leave the other world she will never come back, meaning she will become ill and even die. The temporary and symbolic "death" of the initiate and the departure of her *tazusa* isn't the end of her own life, it is actually the climax of the *kisaiz* initiation ritual. Can the soul of the initiate return? Can the group of shaman welcome the initiate back? These challenges and expectations bring the tension to the highest level during the ritual.

Then the senior shamans will carry the initiate and lay her on the grass mat, cover her eyes with pomelo leaves (representing a state of death) then shout loudly in her ear "*da ! da ! da !*", simulating the sound of her footsteps as she returns, and call her new god-given name, for example, Salamai<sup>3</sup>, hoping that her soul will quickly return from the gods' world. New *mtiu* must imitate the appearance of someone who has died: senior shamans will remind her in advance that when *pahte* takes place (fain) the body should be stiff, the body should be kept still and the eyes closed and breathing should be controlled to create the impression of death. Thus cause the audience to release feelings or have an enhanced personal experience. Even though the audience knows it is faked and is being deliberately performed by the shaman they hope or believe the soul has actually left the body.

To the shamans this soul leaving their body is a kind of dangerous and important performance. If the soul of the initiate does not return the body and soul cannot join as one and if she does not wake up she will have symbolically died. The "death" of the initiate means that the new *mtiu* cannot communicate with the gods, the *kisaiz* initiation ritual is a failure and the gods will withdraw their assistance. However, new *mtiu* will usually suddenly wake up and open their eyes when senior shamans shout "*da ! da ! da !*", then she will jump up to show that they have defeated illness and death and have been "reborn." If she is lucky she can also show off the "special

powers” she has acquired, for example, when some new shaman wake up they have gifts obtained from the gods’ place, for example they will have a small piece of *nuzun* (rice cake) or the hair of a Formosan barking deer in their hand symbolizing good hunting and rich harvest in the future. This is not just a gift or reward from gods for a good performer it is also a means of concretely expressing the authenticity of the journey to the gods’ world and the authority of the shaman.

### ***Conclusion***

The shamanism of the Kavalan imposes gender and non-sexual experience order on the body. The *tagau* and the specific content of some dreams are the sign showing a young woman has been chosen by the goddess. But they are not sufficient to become a *mtiu*. She needs to be attested to this calling and to a distinction by the other world. During the *kisaiz* the bodies of the initiates are forced and guided by taboos imposed on food and behavior to fit into a particular order. This order becomes the rule of their whole life. Furthermore the ritualistic performance of the separation between body and soul are required. This symbolic and temporary death/fainting shows that a *mtiu* can go beyond space and time and then soul and body will once again be joined. In this conversion process, the body goes from “death” to safely waking up/returning, showing that after being reborn and healed she has formally and successfully become a *mtiu* and has entered a publicly acknowledged new stage in which she has a social role.

While the new *mtiu* and the gods establish a relationship, the social relationships between relatives, villagers and tribes’ people from other villages are also repaired and extended. Through the performance of the *kisaiz* the new shaman establishes various kinds of authority: for example the ability to treat illness and, through the near-death or soul-leaving-body experience, the new *mtiu* begins to acquire the ability to learn to communicate with the supernatural and “see” the Spirits and the power to manage the re-creation of life and death. She is, from this time, also able to carry out the soul evoking/“feeding” *patoRqan* ritual when anyone in the village dies. In addition, the transformation of the performance of the *kisaiz* ritual also transforms food like rice-based foods and prey and wealth into a kind of prestige, giving the female shaman a special social position

and allowing the social rebirth of adult women, also nurturing a person who can communicate with the gods for the family and village and, moreover, giving her the right to use/manipulate deep symbolic power.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Sinshe in Chinese.

<sup>2</sup> Senior Sinshe shaman Api (Zhu A-bi) passed away in February 2008.

<sup>3</sup> During the ritual, out of respect for Mutumazu she is not directly called this name, rather she is Salamai.

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Лью Пи-Чен

**ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ДУШИ/ТЕЛА  
И ШАМАНСКОЙ СИЛЫ:  
ШАМАНСКАЯ ИНИЦИАЦИЯ КИЗАИЦ  
СРЕДИ КАВАЛАН НА ТАЙВАНЕ**

Около 1956 года ритуал шаманской инициации *кизаиц*, в ходе которого шаман приобретает целительский дар, исчез и стал частью истории в последней деревне кавалан – ПатоРоган в Хуалине, на востоке Тайваня. Тем не менее, 30 лет спустя, в 1987 году он чудесным образом возродился на современной политической арене. В данном исследовании, основанном на идеях символической практики и игры/представления, хронологически показано, как в течение нескольких столетий *мтиу* (шаман), «исцеляемый божествами», через ритуал *кизаиц* получил «способность» лечить других людей. Другой аспект работы – анализ того, как посредством ритуальных действий, таких как «исполнение» смерти (потеря сознания) во время прохождения духовной нити *saray* через тело шамана (символизирующего выход души из тела), пение и танцы на крыше, жертвенные подношения риса – *мтиу* воспроизводит построение отношений между членами своей группы, между группой и природой, миром