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# From shamanic rituals to theatre and cultural industry: The state, shamanism and gender among the Kavalan (Taiwan)\*

This research will explore the social context in which shamanic rituals have gradually evolved from the village level to the united ethnic group, becoming labels of particular ethnic groups and, finally, a kind of cultural industry promoted by state policy. Aside from social circumstances, in a small-scale society, what internal definable social and cultural frameworks for debate concerning form and meaning take place? Why have the mystifying religious, ritualistic, and taboo characteristics of shamanic rituals, no longer persecuted by state authorities, been put on the stage of the National Theater by aboriginal groups in the form of modern theater, and not in other artistic forms? These shamanic initiation or healing rituals have taken on new life, transforming from rituals that were a part of everyday village life to a performance genre that receives widespread attention – things for viewing and enjoyment by others (Hymes 1975). This genre not only embodies and creates realities of daily life, but also the imagined reality of the stage. In other words, shamanic rituals are no longer only periodi-

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\* This article partly was expanded from “From Kisaiz Shamanic Initiation to Theatre Performance: Female Shamans’ Power and Negotiating Ethnicity among the Kavalan.” In Tai-li Hu and Pi-chen Liu (eds) *Shamans and Ritual Performances of the Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan*. Taipei: Institute of Ethnology Press, Academia Sinica. 505–555. (2010) 劉璧榛 2010. 「從kisaiz成巫治病儀式到當代劇場展演：噶瑪蘭人的女性巫師權力與族群性協商」。刊於台灣原住民巫師與儀式展演，胡台麗、劉璧榛主編，505–555頁。台北：中央研究院民族學研究所。Thanks to the Taiwan National Science Council for the support given to this research under the project “Gender, shamanhood and subjectivity: study of shamanism among the Kavalan and North Amis in Contemporary Contexts.” (NSC100–2628-H-001–010-MY2).

cally social practices, they have broken with tradition to become realities existing only in performance.

What kind of state changes led to such performances being further transformed into a creative industry, being continually duplicated, disseminated, and reproduced like a commercial product? Apart from the forms of the theatricalization having modern aesthetics meanings, what particular political and economic significance do they have? What kind of new social relationships have been produced in the process of this transformation? This research will also reconsider the relationship between gender and shamanic power in the course of this dynamic shift.

### Female shamanism among the Kavalan

For a long time, the northern peoples' shamans traditionally regarded by scholars as the main subject of research and theory-making center; the author has attempted to go beyond this way of thinking by transferring fieldwork to Taiwan. Taiwanese included indigenous peoples still practice shamanism and the shaman is common too. Because of its special geographical position, islands characterized by the convergence between East and Southeast Asia, as well as Oceania and continental Asia, in its small 36,000 square kilometer area aboriginal societies that are patrilineal, matrilineal, bilateral, hunter-gatherer, and farming societies with chief/chiefs, big man or acephalous systems are encompassed. Such complex diversity has hardly been thoroughly studies and even more seldom integrated into shaman research theory. The Kavalan live in the plains regions along the eastern coast of Taiwan. They formerly had a matrilineal society but are now largely Sinitized; numbering only 1,500 people, the group did not gain official recognition as an indigenous people until 2002. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, upland rice, grown mainly by women, gradually supplanted deer pelts taken by men as the main item given to the Dutch colonizers as tribute and used in external trade (Nakamura 1997 [1953]: 111; Borao 1993: 98–120). Rice farming, therefore, become the main activity by which the Kavalan made their livelihood as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

A 1632 account by the Spanish missionary Jacinto Esquivel characterizes shamanism in the region as being feminized (Borao 1993). If we take whether or not males or females can become shaman as a spectrum of gender constraints (that is, as reactive to power relations between genders), we find Kavalan society at one end of the spectrum: The duties of the *mtiu* (shaman), collective offerings to the first ancestors and rice goddess by holding *kisaiz/pakelabi* rites, divination (*pasubli* rites), and healing rituals (*paspi*) are all exclusively carried out by females.

In the 1920s, when shamanism thrived, there were over 30 *mtiu* (female shaman) in a Kavalan village of 300 people. The female-centric community organizations formed by these shamans have rarely been seen among other ethnic communities around the world. Even in the societies of the Tlingit people of the north Pacific and the neighboring Athapascans, which are also matrilineal, the position of shaman and the leading of shamanic rituals are the province of males (Guédon 2004).

Scholars gradually began to take notice of the issue of the feminization of shamans in the 1980s. Balzer (1990) believes that it was the modernizing pressures of the Soviet state that gave rise to the feminization of the shamans among the Khanty people in Siberia. Also relating to issues of state politics, Kendall (1981) and Atkinson (1992) note that shamanic power in East Asia is often (in some cases almost always) in the hands of women, because in this region “shamanic authority was long ago displaced by state authority and where the label ‘spirit medium’ is often used in place of shaman for ritual healers...” (Atkinson 1992: 317) In comparison, feminization occurred much earlier in the shamanism of Taiwan’s Kavalan aborigines, but did not occur due to the influence of state authority and policy. The Kavalan began having frequent contact with the Han in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the end of the century, had almost entirely disappeared due to sinicization, with only the village of PatoRogan,<sup>1</sup> relocated south to Hualien County, continuing to have *mtiu* (shaman). The remote village of PatoRogan, with which intermarriage with the neighboring Amis group occurred, did not fall under the control of Japanese colonial forces until the 1920s, when the people lost their sovereignty and became subject to assimilation. As a unifying political hegemon did not enter the region until relatively late, the villages existed as self-distinguished communities, with their variety of shamanism taking the village as an integrated unit. This research will, therefore, be able to better highlight the regionally diverse character of this female shamanism. As Humphrey (1994) reflects, the relationship between the shaman and the state is filled with interactions and variables, with different actions and reactions occurring even in near local villages.

### **Colonial rule and Christianization: the decline of Shamanism and gap of transmission**

As noted in the life stories of many of the shamans interviewed by the author, during the Japanese colonial period (1895–1945), the rulers banned public assembly because they worried that shamans would hold gatherings to publicly

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<sup>1</sup> 新社 (Sinshe) in Chinese.

resist or challenge the authority of the colonial state. Shamanism was, therefore, denigrated as a backward, superstitious old custom. In addition, children were required to attend public primary schools and were thus unable to be absent for long periods:

A *mtiu* named Api has recalled being absent from school for one week to take part in the *kisaiz* initiation ritual, resulting in primary school teachers assigning them physical chores as punishment, as well as their parents being admonished.

All of these colonial policies made fewer young children aspire to become shamans, while also leading to the simplification of the *kisaiz* initiation rituals of the time. Furthermore, the confiscation of guns from villages and strict prohibition of hunting by the Japanese meant that male family members could no longer contribute venison, boar, or other meat obtained by hunting to these ceremonies as they had in the past. Later, due to food shortages during World War II, many parents were unable to provide the food needed to feed guests at feasts during the week-long *kisaiz* initiation ceremonial events during which sacrifices are offered to the spirits of shamans, the resulting reductions in scale and length further contributing to the decline of shamanic activities .

In the early 1950s, due to the Taiwanese government's (KMT) politically aligning itself with the West to resist the Chinese Communist Party, Taiwan opened itself to Christian missionaries who withdrew from China to come to Taiwan. Numerous missions entered remote indigenous villages in the Hualien-Taidong region to evangelize. Father André Bareigts of Missions étrangères de Paris (the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris) recalls that the Kavalan people in the region were destitute and short of material resources at the time. And missionaries were only able to easily preach in these areas by distributing flour, milk powder, and other goods. In the beginning, missionary work was quite difficult, and was widely met with rejection by local people. Later, missionaries began preaching in the Kavalan language, and switched to a strategy of first convincing male leaders to convert. After more than a decade of effort, the number of new believers began to grow steadily. By the 1970s, Catholicism became the religion of the majority of people in Kavalan villages.

People in PatoRogan village who converted at first continued to invite *mtiu* to their homes to do life cycle rituals or make offerings to ancestors. However, as the influence of Catholicism grew greater, they began to reject traditional beliefs and define them as Animism. As the Church holds that shamanism and the monotheistic beliefs of Christianity are diametrically opposed to one another, converts no longer allowed their daughters to become shaman, nor did villagers openly take part in shaman-related ceremonies, rain-asking rituals, or healing rituals. Resulting in the complete termination of the *kisaiz* initiation rite after 1956, while public shamanic rituals *pakelabi* also became private. Just as Geertz (1973) states, not

only did religious beliefs reflect conflicts and divisions in other aspects of society, but the squeezing out of Kavalan shamanism by Christianity became a key factor in creating interpersonal tension in the village. Such lingering interpersonal conflict still continues today, and is frequently played out in daily life.

### **From shamanic rituals to theatrical performance: Negotiating ethnicity amidst the democratization of the state**

The Shamanism of the Kavalan people, subjected to control and persecution by state authorities for almost a century and rejected by Christian churches for half a century, had almost died out. However, since 1987, Kavalan shamanic initiation and healing rituals (*kisaiz*), after having been interrupted for 30 years, have miraculously reappeared on the modern political stage. Why and how did this happen? The current chief of PatoRogan village recalls that, at that time, due to the effects of state ethnic integration policies, people in Taiwan had no idea who the Kavalan were. Many people who were Kavalan descendants themselves did not know, while some people may have intentionally hidden or not dared to openly acknowledge their ethnic identity. As one elderly interviewee explained:

*Admitting you were Kavalan was equivalent to admitting that you were a 'barbarian'.*

In addition, in the early 1970s, political opposition movements began to take shape in Taiwanese society, clashing with the authority of the state. Although this caused a gradual loosening and democratization of the political order, in the tense political atmosphere when the government announced the lifting of martial law in 1987, many people still feared being seen as rebels "inciting ethnic separatism," and shied away from approving of the Name Rectification Movement. At the same time, the general public was largely alienated from ethnic issues at that time and, unlike Mongolians and Tibetans from China living in Taiwan, Taiwan's indigenous ethnicities had not yet become identities with special constitutional protection.

In my interviews with numerous Kavalan, the first on-stage performance of the shamanic healing ritual (*kisaiz*) that had been lost for thirty years in 1987 was described by most as the beginning of the contemporary identity movement. The event was a song and dance gala organized by the National Taiwan Museum to inaugurate the exhibition of megalith unearthed in Kavalan paddy fields in PatoRogan village. This museum played a major role in imperialist education during the Japanese colonial period and today is an important symbol of state power. The invitation to perform gave members of the group a deep feeling of affirmation and encouragement. Although the celebration was organized by the government, the chief of PatoRogan attempted to bring the village together

in consensus regarding the performance, and worked independently to mobilize participation and planning. Among the many local groups that took part, in order to ensure that they could be clearly distinguished, as well as to attract more notice to avoid marginalization, lively discussions took place within the village. The focus is on how to clearly show “Who we are” in order to define themselves as an ethnic group and thus be distinguished from the nearby Amis people.

What, then was the significance of ‘performing’ shamanic rituals for the Kavalan, a people who were in the process of forming their ethnic identity? What content most represented their ethnic group? Within the group, what debates concerning form and meaning arose? Most people thought that, while there were a number of taboos about the *kisaiz* shamanic initiation ritual, and it had ceased to be practiced for 30 years, given that the related *pakelabi* ritual was still held regularly each year<sup>2</sup> there were, in fact many *mtiu* (shaman) who remained familiar with the songs and dances of the *kisaiz*, and it could, therefore, be taken to represent the ‘cultural traditions’ of the Kavalan. In addition, the shamanic ritual was also the most feasible to render as a stage performance, and was dramatic and performance-oriented. For instance, during the *kisaiz*, the *mtiu* falls unconscious (*pahte*) in a performance of ‘death’, climbs to the roof to sing and dance, and, finally, gives rice cakes (*nuzun*) to the audience. From the perspective of the Kavalan, these segments all had considerable dramatic tension, and were the areas of greatest distinction from the songs and dances of other ethnic groups. Another factor in the decision was that the male-oriented *qataban* head-hunting ritual had ceased for much longer, approximately a century, with only one song and dance having been passed down to the present. Not only would ‘reconstructing’ the ceremony present considerable difficulties, the content of the performance would also be comparatively bland.

The turning of the *kisaiz* shamanic initiation ritual into a modern theatrical performance by the people of PatoRogan village opened up a dialogue with the state: through the script, songs, music and dance and theater being in line with the official cultural ideology. Then, direct conflict with official ethnic integration policies could be avoided. Consequently the group established a plane and action meaning for communicating with the government, an expression of culture and a kind of political opposition, these being its most important form meanings. These theatrical performances were not the only force or form in the name rectification movement, as a non-violent strategy, they were even more able to integrate and mobilize the people of the village. While actually involving various levels, they became a means of negotiation through which the Kavalan

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<sup>2</sup> Since the death of the most senior *mtiu* Api in 2008, the annual shamans’ group ritual *pakelabi* has not been held because there is no one familiar enough with the ritual process and its songs.

gradually removed the stigma of being labeled 'savages' in the process of national democratization. In addition to performing the *kisaiz* at their Name Rectification movement events in the capital Taipei and 'return to roots' events in their hometown, Yilan, the ritual also continued to appear at the National Theater, cultural centers, and cultural festival events held by the various departments of cultural affairs. The intention of these performances is clearly not to attract tourists. These opportunities to give public performances not only attracted media, scholars' and government officials' attention, it became an important mechanism for arousing public support. At the same time they also strengthened the self-identity of Kavalan people scattered across Taiwan resulting from a lack of shared experience. These chances helped as well to coalesce and shape a common imagination, consolidating group identity so that they could interact with the state to reconstruct themselves and negotiate their ethnicity under the new circumstances that came with state democratization. Meanwhile, with the new Kavalan ethnic identity gradually taking shape, the group struggled with the government for ethnic equality and to become a new first nation, contributing to gradual movement toward an intersubjective relationship between the state and marginalized ethnic groups (Honneth, Hans 1991).

The contemporary theatricalization of shamanic rituals has given them a new significance and 'mission'. From rituals within a single village, they have slowly been broadened to the ethnic level, becoming the label of a specific ethnicity. They are not only the traditional cultural imagination of a new Kavalan identity, but also represent the 'cultural traditions' of their ancestors, rather than being only a religious belief. The process of rebuilding this value gave the Kavalan people a new political life. Why, however, did this occur only in contemporary theatrical forms and not a revitalization of village shamanism?

### **The distinction between the revival and theatrical performance of Shamanism**

After the collapse of socialism in Mongolia in the 1990s, shamanism, long dormant, experienced a sudden wave of popularity among the Buryat people in the country. Buyandelgeriyn (2007) noted that their shamans used rituals to lighten the burden of the many uncertainties that the people faced in contemporary society and established ethnic identity by using the past to explain the present. In the mid-1980s, radical nationalists in Siberia believed that many ethnic elements of local traditional indigenous cultures had been destroyed in the course of the globalization that had taken place in recent years. Blaming the decline of traditional beliefs for the loss of national culture, they claimed that the way to preserve and strengthen ethnic identity was to revive shamanism (Bulgakova

2008). In both of these examples we can see a close relationship between the construction of ethnic identity and the revival of shamanism, or, within a particular political and economic context, shamanism being taken as a counter-power vis-à-vis state power or the central order, returning from the periphery to the center of power when these powers disintegrate (Humphrey 1994: 194).

The example of the Kavalan is particular. The *kisaiz* shamanic initiation ritual was originally a fairly localized, village-level ceremony which, in a changing political and economic environment, became a 'soft' means for a marginalized ethnic group to take part in the process of state democratization. What is interesting, however, is that shamanic rituals have been revived as stage performances, rather than through the conscious, large-scale reconstruction and revival of rituals in village daily life. There has been only a small-scale revival of shamanic beliefs in villages since the 1990s. Two girls took part in the *pakelabi* shaman ritual and became shamans as replacement for the *kisaiz*. Also, some Christians began to hold the *palilin* (ancestor worship ritual) or consult the shaman to have their dreams interpreted or illness cured.

The usage of dramatic performance methods was both the subject and result of conflict and negotiation within the villages. In the 1960s, approximately 80% of Kavalan in the village converted to Christianity. These converts opposed the revival of shamanic rituals most vociferously, believing that, as they had come to believe in God and Jesus, they could no longer call upon the traditional deities. Yet, they still harbored fears that these deities would 'find them' and 'make them sick'. In other words, a paradox emerged, with the majority of Kavalan no longer believing in shamanism, yet still believing in the symbolic meanings of the original rituals and the effects that they had, and fearing that performing them would also produce real results. Another faction believed that "*the songs of the kisaiz were the original songs used to summon deities and could not be chanted outside of ceremonies or without observing manmet*" (restrictions on diet and behavior). Furthermore, *mtiu* Api emphasized: "*they could only be learned by those initiated as mtiau in a formal ritual.*" "*Shamanic songs were not to be sung by anybody who wished to.*" To not adhere to these fundamental principles would be, this group believed, an act of insincerity and disrespect to one's ancestors, which caused a number of people to fear that certain symbolic practices might produce effects such as illness, accidents, heavy rain, or a poor harvest. In particular, elder shamans were terrified of performing alongside laypeople, fearing that they would become ill or that misfortune would befall the village.

Another faction of male elites, who led the name reclamation movement and many of whom were also church leaders, believed that "*what was on display in modern theater was merely a 'performance'! Like the acting in a television show, and that offerings were not really made (paspaw) in such performances, which were some-*



thing separate from genuine rituals. Appearing onstage was, therefore, only a performance for an audience and, therefore, not problematic, nor would it produce any undesirable effects. Given the sense of crisis that existed about the disappearance of the ethnic group, in order to promote traditional Kavalan culture and gain recognition by the rest of society, they reasoned that it was for the greater common goal of the future of our people.” They thought that it should be acceptable to do away with the taboos involved with shamanic rituals and their mystifying religious nature and give them new significance by their performance. For the Kavalan, this negotiated concept of “performance” was the intentional creation of an unreal life on stage, being neither a current ritual action nor a reality constructed by using symbolism. This example highlights how the insertion of the theatrical experience and symbolism into rituals has profoundly shaped the Kavalan people’s particular social reality.

In order to avoid confusion and complications, the village chief engaged in negotiations with the *mtiu* (shaman) who has symbolic power, revising scripts and simplifying songs and dances, as well as separating performers’ true social identities from their identities as actors, in order to make the entire performance a kind of role-playing. Parts relating to symbolic practices were also removed, and actual ritual (*spaw*) was held first in order to notify the deities “in order to avoid bringing down disaster by confusing the deities.” This entire process, as a ‘performance’ as defined by Geertz (1973), was an act of creating a particular society’s collective text. As the Kavalan created this new text they specially differentiated between the definition of rite and theater, also ritualizing the theater, regarding the gods offered sacrifices in rituals (believing the gods really exist) and the act of offering sacrifice to the gods as belief and taking them into the theater and, at the same time, they still acknowledge the spiritual power of the *mtiu* (shaman). This is unlike the bringing in of different language or physical experiences emphasized in Turner’s Experimental theatre (1982) to try to change the modality of experience and to have better transcultural understanding.

A number of researchers have focused on analysis of shamans’ individual characteristics and trance or possession-related rituals, deeming such rituals to be a kind of performance on the basis that, in such rituals, the shaman will make use of a special setting, props (such as drums), offerings, song, music, gestures and movements to imitate or perform as the deity. Therefore, these rituals are given the most important element of western drama – the playing of roles in a staged reality set apart from daily life, (stage-sacred vs daily life-profane). (Haebartlin 1918; Métraux 1955; Eliade 1968). Some researchers have even posited that performances that were part of shamanic rituals (such as drumming, escape acts, or the use of props to drive away evil spirits) are not only the origin of drama, circus acts, and popular entertainment, but can also be seen as

a standard of aesthetics (Kirby 1974; Hu 1998, 2003; Wang 1989). Researchers have viewed sacred rituals as theatrical stage performances, and thus developed 'performance' as an analytic concept (Kister 2004).

For the Kavalan, shamanism still survives in people's daily lives, and has genuine symbolic efficacy in offstage life. The changes made in the modern theatrical performances are a means to remove the sacred elements in order to maintain separation from real life. In addition, what is enacted onstage is an imagination of the past with a current political consciousness. Through negotiations, the Kavalan have very clearly 'historicized' the *kisaiz*, viewing it in the past tense. Doing so has created an imagined theatrical reality, interpreting it as "the traditional culture of past ancestors" so that it is separate from the actual lives of participants who have converted to other religions. Although most *mtiu* are still alive and well, or even taking parts in stage performances, villages still routinely hold *pakelabi* rituals each year, showing that the shamanic songs and dances enacted onstage have not truly disappeared into history.

The trend of contemporary theatrical adaptations of shamanic rituals is the result of conscious negotiation by the Kavalan people. It is intended to provide audiences composed of ethnic Kavalan with an idealized image. Although the content of the performances includes and reflects conflicts in internal relations, and formal recognition is given to the value of shamanism and the *mtiu* amidst the changes of the new society, this value is not present in their daily lives. For instance, in performances, participants show dramatic approval of initiation and healing rituals and the *mtiu* (shaman), who, while onstage, receive affirmation from the entire ethnic group and other ethnic communities. Only through them can the actual existence and authenticity of the 'traditional life' of the Kavalan be proven to others and the existence of the Kavalan rationalized so their name could be rectified. The Kavalan also respectfully refer to elder *mtiu* as national treasures, as if their true traditional culture will disappear without them. The *mtiu* have, however, been marginalized in actual village life. It is only in the context of this particular political performance, that is, only when attempting to shape ethnic identity, that they are accorded especially high value. The stage performances are a dressed-up 'reality' to be seen by others, with performances that highlight, exaggerate, and emphasize differences meant to evoke various feelings of wonder, sympathy, and approval from audiences of outsiders. At the same time, they can have the effects of bringing interaction with academia and drawing attention from the media and tourists, using state power or capital as defined by Bourdieu for self-affirmation and finding of their identity. This is a gradual process of destigmatization and decolonization, in which the Kavalan have reconstructed their subjectivity through the reinterpretation of cultural rituals and traditions.

## New social relationships: cultural creative industry

The Kavalan Name Reclamation Movement, which arose after the first shamanic theatrical performance in 1987, was also part of the Indigenous Name Reclamation movements that arose in 1983. In 1994, after these movements had persisted for over a decade, the constitution was first amended to use the word 'aborigines' (原住民) in place of 'mountain compatriots' (山胞) to respect the fact that the indigenous people were ethnic communities with different cultures. Then, in 1997, a clause was added to the constitution, which explicitly stipulated that the state has to "...actively preserve and foster the development of aboriginal languages and culture." The raising of aboriginals' status as a special ethnic group to the constitutional level was also reflected by internal adjustments to the organization of the government. In 1996, the Council of Indigenous Peoples was established under the Executive Yuan, and receives 0.4% of the national annual budget.

Because most of the Kavalan people of PatoRogan village lived in lowland administrative regions during the Japanese colonial era and were, therefore, recognized as lowland aborigines, the Kavalan's winning of recognition as a distinct nation actually had no concrete effect on their lives, in terms of work, land, and residence rights, for example. The substantive change in 2002 was that they became an independent unit to which resources could be allocated in the implementation of policies, which the Kavalan imagined would allow them to have more resources to resolve the looming crisis of the continuation of their ethnic group, and avoid being marginalized. In addition, in terms of symbolic significance to the new democratized State, as the President said in a personal visit to their village, it was "*expected to make space for respecting the value of diversity in Taiwan*" (Lin 2003: 322). With the 'establishment' of the Kavalan, the ethnic group became an important new symbol of a multicultural country.

In the last few years, under the new relationship established with the State, shamanic rituals gradually became a cultural industry under state policies to promote their ethnic group. The *kisaiz* went from being collectively performed by Kavalan at the National Theater to being taught to performers at the Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Culture Park, where it is recreated in the performance "The Priestess on the Rooftop."<sup>3</sup> Elder *mtiu* began training a group of young, non-Kavalan professional dancers to give regular performances for tourists and commercial promotion. Over the course of these transformations, we can see how, under the impact of globalization, through cultural policies the state has again redefined the songs and dances of shamanic rituals in the new relationships. They

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<sup>3</sup> The Kavalan believe that the Chinese name for shaman (巫師 *wushi*) has been stigmatized for a long time and have replaced it with "祭司 priestess."

have developed them into flexible 'economies of signs' (Lash and Urry 1994) so that cultural tourism can revive villages that have declined with the impact of globalization and industrialization from 1990s, and create employment opportunities to resolve the social crises that have come with globalization. This kind of government cultural, economic and political policy response has not really stopped the outflow of population and revived Kavalan shamanism in the local village. However, in this process of interaction, shamanism has stripped away the stigma and become a symbol of national multiculturalism.

### **Conclusion: shaman's new role and the expanded domain of her power**

In the interactive process of the change from tribal society to nationalized ethnic group, have the female shamans who formerly possessed important power become relatively marginalized? How do they exert agency? The *mtiu* told me: "*the experience of frequent performances has made us feel respected and affirmed and we have again become the focus of the attention of the people and the media.*" In addition to representing other members of the group in making an offering to deities to inform them before a rehearsal or performance (rather than a group prayer), each performance can only be carried out with their agreement and assistance. If the *mtiu* do not agree to participate, the performance cannot proceed smoothly, as other people do not know the songs and dances. As a result, in interactions with the State, elite male activists and church leaders must also depend on the views of the *mtiu*. The power of the *mtiu*'s opinion has returned from the margins of the village to the center.

In addition to serving as both directors and actors, the *mtiu* also create the scripts for performances, thinking about how to create a realistic effect onstage while also maintaining some distance from actual rituals. In this process of recreation, they gradually demystify and lift taboo from the *kisaiz* ritual songs and dances that only they know and can make, transforming them into shared ethnic knowledge that can be taught to others. The *mtiu* are also invited to primary schools to teach songs, and have even combined the words of *kisaiz* songs with the tunes of songs once sung in the male-oriented *qataban* celebrations held after headhunting in the past. They blended and rearranged them into new songs, allowing more people to chant them nowadays at the Harvest Festival. According to the explanation of a *mtiu*: "*this gives people outside the ethnic group the opportunity to hear them, expanding the stage and audience for us.*" They also hoped that the author, as an anthropologist, would be diligent in making recordings, and not just let men speak into the microphone that that not only men would be seen on television. In this way, they strove to become important representative figures in the village and respected opinion leaders.

However, the performances led by *mitu* are scenes of the kind politically suppressed as “inherited superstitions and religion of the uncivilized psyche” (Ino 1996 [1896-1899]: 236) during the Japanese colonial period. Referring to them as ‘negative customs’, the Nationalist government also repeatedly called for them to be improved for over 60 years. Yet to be able to perform these rituals, once stigmatized and saddled with ethnic prejudices against the ‘savage and backward’ and ‘barbarian’, at museums symbolizing state power, theaters symbolizing high culture, and universities symbolizing lofty status, and particularly in a theatrical form accorded positive value, has, in addition, to causing the Kavalan to begin to positively affirm their own shamanic culture, also given the outside world a positive impression of ethnic culture. By gradually eroding outsiders’ erroneous beliefs about ‘savage and backward’ ethnic groups, and the kinds of negative and fearful imaginings of native ‘witches’ noted by Taussing (1987), the construction of a new image of shamanic song and dance as traditional culture has had a profound and lasting effect. These ‘negative customs’ took on new life in a new form and, in the context of a new political struggle, were gradually rationalized as ‘traditional culture’ and culture’ heritage with positive value. Shamans, having originally played the role of religious leaders or healers, have now become ritual experts, national treasures unequalled in skill and knowledge. They control knowledge and the interpretation of the rich symbolism of these rituals, playing a decisive role in the transmission of traditional culture and knowledge.

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