

*Identity, Gender and Settlement: Ritual Studies of Changing Kavalan*

認同、性別與聚落：噶瑪蘭人變遷中的儀式研究. Pi-chen Liu 劉璧榛. Taipei 臺北; Nantou 南投: Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan 行政院原住民族委員會; Taiwan Historica 國史館臺灣文獻館, 2008. 379pp.

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Since the 1990s, simultaneous trends in Taiwan toward globalization and localization have contributed to people's construction of ethnic identity and local solidarity. Such rewriting of Taiwanese consciousness has relied heavily on a "rediscovery" of cultural traditions, especially ritual performances, corresponding to P'ingpu identity, i.e., the identity of being plains aborigines. P'ingpu identity is then debated as an indigenous or a mestizo identity and used to claim that Taiwan is not Chinese. Pi-chen Liu's *Identity, Gender and Settlement: Ritual Studies of Changing Kavalan* studies the relationships among ethnic identity, gender and ritual performance(s) of the Kavalan people (one of the P'ingpu peoples) who live along the eastern coast of Taiwan.

In the book, Liu explores the relationship between Kavalan identity and various ritual performances. She also pays attention to the gendered exchanges in the ritual processes. "*Paspaw*", literally "to do ritual", is very important in Kavalan society. Liu points out that *paspaw* is the key to understanding the relationships among ecology, production/reproduction and social relationships in Kavalan society. Ritual performance is seen as a mechanism for the empowerment of Kavalan culture that rewrites and enhances people's Kavalan identity and solidarity.

Yet, ritual performance in Kavalan society contrasts female and male and has different meanings for men and women. Women establish an inherited relationship with the supernatural. "*Subli*", a ritual of divination, is always performed by a woman called a "*mtiu*". The "*mtiu*" does the rituals related to goddess worship, rice cultivation and settlement solidarity.

The "*mtiu*" have their own "*kisaiz*" (rites of passage) and "*pakelabi*" (annual celebration). The "*mtiu*" also performs the "*patoRqan*", a ritual calling for the dead to return. More importantly, the "*mtiu*" performs the "*palilin*", the ritual of worshipping the ances-

tors. There are many “*prisin*” (taboo) during the “*palilin*” process. Kavalan people believe that the dead continue to eat after yjru die. Family members must feed their own ancestors. Otherwise, the ancestors will feel hungry and pass misfortunes onto their descendants.

Among all the “*prisin*” during the “*palilin*” process, the most important one is to kill the “*tuku*” (cock) without bleeding. It is very symbolic and political. The “*tuku*” symbolizes manhood. Killing the “*tuku*” without blood symbolizes the female’s power over the male. The female is the center of the family. She controls “bleeding” or “not bleeding” of the “*tuku*.” The female reclaims power over her “*napawan*” (husband) and consolidates the gender relationship within the family.

Do men perform ritual? Yes. They do. Liu thinks that rituals for men, unlike those for women, symbolize fair, equal status within the public sphere. It is the field where men compete, demonstrate and actualize themselves.

Men perform “*qataban*” and “*spaw do razing*.” “*Qataban*” means headhunting. It is historical now, though some elders still remember it. The story from a hundred years ago revealed that the “*qataban*” used to be a ritual for distinguishing enemy, self and friend. And it was a ritual of manhood. Nevertheless, “*qataban*” is being revitalized nowadays in a postmodern form. Kavalan people transform “*qataban*” by erasing religion, taboo, ritual, and manhood from its meaning. Presently, “*qataban*” has become a symbol of unity and solidarity. There are many forms of “*qataban*” now, such as: the Christian church’s “*qataban*,” tribal “*qataban*,” celebratory “*qataban*”...etc..

As for “*spaw do razing*,” it is a ritual for worshipping the sea. It symbolizes the exchange between the mountains and the sea. In the old days, during “*spaw do razing*” people kill “pigs” to exchange for “fishes.” The pig is the link between man and the sea. Now, people just worship the sea. People with different religious beliefs perform their worship differently. What is important here is that people revitalize their ethnic identity through invented tradition.

Why does ethnic identity feature in ritual performances? As mentioned at the beginning, since the 1990s people have used P’ingpu identity to rewrite Taiwanese consciousness. Ritual performances turn out to be the key to acting out the so-called P’ingpu identity. And Liu’s *Identity, Gender and Settlement: Ritual Studies of Changing Kavalan* is the best example.

In sum, Liu’s *Identity, Gender and Settlement: Ritual Studies of Changing Kavalan* describes not only the ritual performances in detail but also presents Kavalan society as a gender-inflected society with multi-faceted identities. Moreover, the Kavalan were the first P’ingpu people to gain official recognition and become one of the fourteen indigenous peoples in Taiwan today. Many factors contributed to their success in reclaim-

ing their ethnic name, but the performative nature and dramatic action of the rituals are among the main reasons. The ritual performances are actually dramatic forms of collective action.

The Kavalan, who are considered to be the least sinicized "P'ingpu" people, began searching for their Austronesian roots in the late 1980s. They started with a search for their "relatives" who migrated along the northeastern and eastern coast, and then tried to revive their "indigenous" language and cultural activities. They appropriated their "language" from the memory of the elderly people who could still speak the Kavalan language, and then organized a language curriculum to be taught in elementary schools. They held a "Searching for Our Past" event in 1991 in order to gather the Kavalan together and to link their identity with the past. They extended the range of the Fengnian Festival in 1993 in order to get more people involved. They also dug into the memory of the elders and reconstructed many traditional rituals that are the aggregations of the traditions of the Kavalan and contiguous indigenous peoples. In 1994, in P'ingtung county in southern Taiwan, they urged President Lee to recognize their existence as an indigenous people. This meeting was the first organized by the indigenous peoples themselves. The Kavalan have continued their struggle for ethnic identity, in the sense of collective action. Pi-chen Liu's *Identity, Gender and Settlement: Ritual Studies of Changing Kavalan* tells the story.

Finally, I would like to recommend this book for those who are interested in ritual studies, the revitalization movement of P'ingpu identity, the topic of gender, the formation of Taiwanese consciousness, etc.. *Identity, Gender and Settlement: Ritual Studies of Changing Kavalan* provides excellent, detailed data and inspiring arguments. It is ethnographic as well as anthropological.