



The perspective of indigenous culture - A case study of the Truku tribe in East Taiwan

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Abstract

Aim: This research aims to find out if and how the Truku people of East Taiwan have managed to keep their traditions alive over time.

Methodology Archival research, participant observation, and the use of a SWOT analysis all contribute to the qualitative nature of this investigation.

Findings: The Truku people, it can be said with confidence, serve as a prime illustration of the maturation of both tribal culture and the Seejoq language. The benefits and drawbacks, opportunities, and threats of tourism development for the Truku tribe have all been critically analyzed in this study. It has been discovered that the rituals of the May Bari of Truku can significantly revive the Truku people. Created based on its beliefs and practices.

Implications/Novelty: Our original contribution is that we looked at how tribal pride in their ancestry has changed over time. This research bolsters the case for the widespread acceptance of tribal people into modern society's networks, where they enjoy the same rights and freedoms as everyone else, not just in isolated communities.

Key Words: Tribe, Tourism, Culture, Festival, Ritual

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INTRODUCTION

The indigenous people have become increasingly aware of the growing interest in tribal culture in recent years, and they are organizing massive cultural events to draw attention to their existence and preserve their traditional values, customs, and way of life (Yamaji 1987; Sayama 1983). To help the outside world better understand the spirit and essence of tribal culture, elders teach their children rituals passed down from generation to generation. Since at least 1991, members of the Truku ethnic group have tried to proclaim the distinctiveness of their ethnic culture through traditional artistic endeavors and ancestral ritual performances. They build and perform ancestral rituals incorporating the history of ethnic groups, national management policies, and the accumulated expression of internal emotions to fortify the Truku people's sense of ethnic identity, ethnic independence, and individual social personality drive. Beyond social culture and historical time, they also motivate the audience's presence and elicit an emotional response during public performances (Cihung 2011; Nasser 2017). This research aims to find out if and how the Truku people of East Taiwan have managed to keep their traditions alive over time. This is very important for modern musicians and artists trying to find genuine examples of regional styles from the past. Linguists who study the evolution of languages will find this important. Importance in the political sphere regarding ethnic, social, and political pride. It has great relevance for the search for universal principles across religions in comparative studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1993, United Nations had designated "the International Aboriginal Year", and announced the holding of "The World Indigenous International Cooperation Program for the First Decade". The world started touristic

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activities to explore mysterious remote and strange customs of the aboriginal areas (Ji 1998; Weng and Yang 2016). Chen (2004) indicated that indigenous tourism is using the cultural resources of the indigenous people to develop the tourism activities, including indigenous handicrafts, clothing, architecture, music, dance and cultural traditions. Indigenous tourism is when the tribes use their own surrounding ecological environment and national culture as a tourist resource.

Through the marketing strategy of the tribal culture tour, tourists observe and understand Aboriginal cultural traits, by attending the cultural relics, dance performances, life experience, with guided tours (Zhang 2004). So, for the sustainability of indigenous tourism, it should be combined with a wide range of tribal ceremonies, culture, art, architecture, festivals, monuments and natural beauty of the indigenous region by tourism planning, and marketing (Liu 2012). In the past ten years, the indigenous festival (in general called Annual Worship Festival) has been organized by the government successfully, and the indigenous culture has been transformed from visiting natural landscape to the deep exploration of local culture. At the same time, it is not desirable to think of the Truku tribe as a marketable commodity, to be preserved self-consciously as an attraction for the tourist industry.

Different ethnic groups have many types of rituals, and different rituals of the communities themselves also have different meanings. The annual rituals are rich in the cultural connotations of faith, social organization, traditional life and taboos of each ethnic group. To Truku, the implementation of various traditional rituals is the practice of faith in the ancestral spirit. This includes the life beliefs of the Truku, such as sowing, harvesting, hunting, ancestral worship, head hunting, rain free prayer, prayer, medical service, and so on (Cihung 2011).

Different ethnic groups due to the different customs and lifestyles, have their own different styles of festivals and legends. Taiwan indigenous people have all kinds of local rich traditional ritual, a unique oral pathway from generation to generation, in which the ancestors of life and wisdom are portrayed in the ceremony (Council of Indigenous People 2011).

The Truku ethnic group believed in the relationship of guardianship between the human and ancestral spirits. In order to maintain the traditional order of life, crops harvests and to maintain the animal species for hunting, ritual activities are important events in the life of the tribe. The purpose of the rites is to pray for the ancestral spirits to guard the land for the sake of farming and hunting. Truku has always maintained the same family-centered tribal groups, to consolidate the traditional community of social ancestors.

The Truku tribe had an impact on traditional cultural values during the Japanese colonial and Chinese government rule. It played its part during the destruction of the Gaya as the core of faith and the abolition of cultural practices (Hualien County Shiulin Township 2016). In the resultant disorder of culture, it was found that the Mgay Bari ritual embodies the central idea of the ancestors of the Truku. This is through the sowing, hunting, and harvest rituals that show continuity with the manifestations of traditional life, so that generations can keep the lessons of ancestors in mind.

As for the understanding of traditional culture and the connotation of ritual names and rituals, there are many differences. The “ancestral spiritual ritual” is used as the official name of the festival. It is called “Mgay Bari”. The significance of the ritual is the ancestral spirits give blessing to the harvest and significance to thanksgiving. After many years of promotion and reform, Hualien County Xiulin Township Office, in addition to the traditional process of sacrificial rites, also displays exhibits of the past life of tribe weaving, ramming glutinous rice, making bamboo rice, hunting knives, bows and arrows, rattan and other handicrafts. In 2005, the festival was extended to include national dance competitions, industrial exhibitions, craft exhibitions and traditional archery competitions. In 2015, they held the “Truku Literature and History Book Fair”, which displayed the record of traditional skills of the Truku, cultural history, music and dance and other related books. Mgay Bari Thanksgiving of Truku also extends to other tribes. Tribes celebrate in accordance with their tribal environment, and developed the various festival activities of tribal type.

METHODOLOGY

This research intended to explore the annual ritual activities of Mgay Bari in Shiulin town in Hualien County, East Taiwan. We studied tribal people who participate in this activity, their spirit and tendencies of integration into the ethnic activities. We used qualitative research method, including archival analysis and observation. We

also applied SWOT analysing data. We hope to find a suitable marketing strategy for the future, to create greater economic benefits of cultural tourism. We analyzed the advantages, disadvantages, and limitations of the culture development of Truku.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since Truku was successfully recognized officially in 2004, the government begins more actively to collect their own materials of ethnic culture, the recollections of the elderly, the elites' knowledge, and long-term investment in cultural workers to explore historical and cultural materials. They look for the ethnic origins in the limited information and the unique memory of the elderly. Mgay Bari in its long-term complex structure has gradually condensed the tribe's rich and diverse content every year. With the formation of Taiwan's unique aboriginal sightseeing style and assets, it is hoped that Mgay Bari has united the tribal efforts to develop Taiwan's aboriginal potential for tourism events.

There is an interdependent relationship between festivals and cultural tourism. The two eventually have to return to the locale for sustainable development. Festivals and cultural tourism have the characteristics of diverse development. If it is a single industry, it is easy to deduce certain categories of features, and ignore the cultural uniqueness, inheritance and value.

The expansion of the concept of culture is not limited to architecture or ritual itself, but also to peripheral derivatives. It is not just the transfer over generations, also the accompaniment of other "products" that have been developed (Prentice 1994). It is worthwhile to explore the traditional creations in terms of intentionality and un-intentionality, when considering these new and old traditions in a more deliberate way (Hobsbawm 1983).

Truku people may take advantage of this strong historic identity and cohesion. At the same time, we need to prevent enclosing tribal people in an enclave or enclosure like exhibits for tourists, but to recognize, they also may need and wish to assimilate with the wider non-tribal population. We appreciate that indigenous tourism is only one valuable aspect of Truku life and should not be allowed to eclipse other non-tourist targeted activities. Opportunity should also be taken to develop the non-tourist elements of Truku society.

SWOT Analysis of Mgay Truku Tribe

In this study, we defined traditional indigenous tourism, and collected documents of Mgay Bari. Then we reviewed the Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) of the ritual festival in the development of the tourism industry. By this SWOT analysis report, it is hoped to work out an effective strategy to strengthen the Mgay Bari of Truku rituals, in order to develop more indigenous tourism, as the International Aboriginal Festival activities are unique.

Strengths (S)

- To increase the visibility of sacrificial ceremonies due to the increase of manpower / financial / material resources in the public sector.
- With the Truku family's unique cultural style, inheritance carries forward the deeper symbolic significance.
- Ethnic participation is high, and there is the power of cohesion of ethnic groups. The tribe should make use of these strong points to enhance their political status.

Weaknesses (W)

- Official network platform is not set up to record the activities related to save the cultural message.
- Official activities are in the form of management, and not actively towards the development of Aboriginal culture and tourism as the goal of operations.
- The motive of ethnic participation has been reduced to the national movement conference, and the traditional culture has less publicity and exploration.
- For venue change, not ideal.
- Innovative courage is needed
- Needs willingness to actively invest, and to get rid of inferior elements.

Opportunities (O)

- Develop Taiwan's unique aboriginal sightseeing activities.
- To extend the festival time, with the aboriginal tribal tours, attract tourists.
- Marketing Aboriginal cultural and creative industries.
- Manpower and funding is expected to be able to re-invest in the history of the elegant, so that the culture has the opportunity to be fully preserved.

Threats (T)

- Aboriginal industry has become commoditized.
- Only once a year for the event, presents a one-sided view of the culture.
- Cultural level appears static.
- Cultural workers are too few, especially cultural scholars and music and dance experts.
- Unfavorable venue.

More attention should be paid to the national movement, which should not be seen as a weakness but an ally. How to avoid commodification of Truku culture and industry while at the same time marketing it, is a difficult question, as seen in other minority cultures (e.g. American Indians). It will be the most interesting question for future researchers.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this paper, through examining the relevant literature on the Mgay Bari Truku tribe, we used SWOT analysis, in an attempt to assess the merits and demerits, opportunities and threats of the development of tourism, for the Truku tribe. We find that Mgay Bari of Truku's rituals can play a strong part, in rebuilding the Truku tribe founded on its rituals and ideology. This emphasizes the importance of going back to one's natural roots, and returning to seek the significance of the traditional rites (Hualien County Shiulin Township Office 2016).

We found opportunities for development of visits to sites of indigenous civilizations, for exploration of cultural relics, rites, and propose plans for a future marketing strategy to create greater economic benefits from cultural tourism. By repeating the display of ritual dance-drama is possible to convey the deep significance of traditional culture. Despite criticism and challenges from within the village, about the original intention of this initiative, we highlighted the attempt for all ethnic groups to agree about the preservation of their heritage. Remembering the footprints of ancestors left behind, recalling the ancestors' teachings, indigenous people may protect future generations, who in their lives will practice in accordance with the spirit of the ancestors. This spirit is transferred and deeply rooted by the awareness of ritual. The Mgay Bari of Truku rituals have certainly enough room to play an expanding part within the plans for tourism of indigenous ancestral cultures in Taiwan.

Our unique contribution is that this study explored the tribal culture development since the time of pride in tribal ancestry has replaced former beliefs that indigenous people were inferior. The significance of this study is that it adds some weight to assert equality of opportunity for tribal people, not only as preserved within tribal enclaves, but also within the networks of modern society.

Limitations of Research

We were limited to one indigenous tribe, and the situation may be different for other tribal peoples in Taiwan. Future research should focus on how it is possible to preserve and market tribal rituals and art works without to some degree making them into commodities. The answer to this may lie in the hands of the local artists themselves.

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