

# Study on the Digitalization of Festival Culture in Taiwan's Aboriginal Literature

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## Abstract

In this project, the term "teaching practice" is intended to focus on creative teaching and innovative research to promote multi-intelligence digital humanities and cultivate knowledge of aboriginal culture through field investigation and humane care. Therefore, the curriculum of Aboriginal Literature is based on: (1) An awareness of local and tribal culture and care; (2) An innovative teaching model (from a cognitive model to a cognitive skills model); (3) An emotional model (care of ethnic humanities); (4) A digital model (digital humanities and archives, learner-based learning, flipped classrooms and problem-oriented learning (PBL)). The aim of the curriculum is to guide students to reflect on contemporary multicultural values, learn about holistic education and focus on people's core concerns.

The rituals that are part of Taiwan's Atayal and Thao cultures are integrated into the innovative education of aboriginal literature, and students are led to participate in field investigations of the ceremonies to complete the digital cultural documentary of the Atayal Thanksgiving ceremony to reach the innovative teaching goal of digital humanities education.

**Keywords:** Aboriginal literature, Aboriginal culture, Digital humanities, Field study, Action research

## Introduction

This study focuses on the digitalization of the ceremonial culture in Taiwan's aboriginal literature. The author has conducted action research as part of the field study of the Atayal ritual culture-related visits. The research specifically incorporated the Atayal ritual culture into the aboriginal literature curriculum.

The teaching goal of this research is to cultivate and advance the digital humanities of the students: 1) the level of "literature knowledge", which guides the study of the aboriginal texts of the students, invites aboriginal scholars and experts to give special lectures and contact the local tribes during field surveys; 2) the level of "innovation digital", which is supplemented by a field survey of the traditional rituals of the indigenous peoples with the students invited to participate in the Atayal Thanksgiving Festival (Ryax Smaqas Hnuway Utux Kayal) and established digital archives on aboriginal ceremonies. This included documentary filming, interviews with tribal elders, and exhibitions at the Aboriginal Cultural and Creative Documentary Film Festival.

It is expected that a number of humanistic collections will be produced, such as the Atayal Thanksgiving Festival, an original ethnic documentary interview, lectures by experts, the teachers' lectures, etc. These will enhance the students' multiple learning and lead to specific desired results. By

introducing the concepts of innovation, creativity and originality, we have established a new teaching model for aboriginal literature. The terms: "original teaching and research", "creative teaching" and "originality in research" are for the important index on teaching purposes.

## The Diversified Festival Culture of Taiwan Aboriginal Literature

Taiwan's population comprises various cultural and ethnic groups, including the Han people and those of Austronesian descent. Taiwan's aborigines belong to the Austronesian group and include the Pingpu tribes. Those from the Nandao language group, which comprises less than two percent of Taiwan's total population, are located in an area of more than 16,000 square kilometers, forty-five percent of the whole of Taiwan.

Due to Taiwan's diverse natural environment, the aborigines developed different ways of life, such as farming, hunting, fishing and food collecting, depending on the ecology of their area. Different tribal types also developed. Therefore, aboriginal culture reflects a dialogue between the ethnic groups and the natural environment, and embraces rich spiritual meanings in Taiwan's aboriginal culture.

The sacrificial rituals of the Atayal people are intrinsically connected with their creation narrative: when their ancestors, Mabuta and Mayan, went up the mountain, one of them was killed by a snake. It was believed that this tragedy occurred because no sacrifice had been offered and to rectify this, a pig was slaughtered. Thus, sacrifice became part of the beliefs and customs. [1]

Traditional rituals are an extremely important part of Taiwan's aboriginal culture, with each group having its own idiosyncratic practices. The rituals of the various ethnic groups also have many different spiritual meanings. To understand the aboriginal culture in depth, we must first understand the cultural significance of the rituals of all the ethnic groups. (Table 1)

The traditional rituals of the aborigines are often held on a mountain or at a river, with the sky and the earth as the stage and the night as the backdrop. Worship of the gods and respect for the ancestors are important parts of the tribal ethics and social life. Among the Atayal, for example, the practice of various traditional ceremonies is actually a declaration of belief in ancestral spirits. The rituals themselves mostly relate to the group's livelihood: agriculture, hunting and headhunting. Therefore, there are pioneering offerings, sowing festivals, weeding offerings, harvest festivals, collection offerings, picaning sapa, headhunting offerings, and ancestral offerings.

**\* Table 1. 16 ethnic groups of indigenous peoples  
 (refer to Wikipedia) [2]**

Ethnic group	Population	Note
Pangcah (Amis)	210,501	
Payuan (Paiwan)	101,234	
Tayal (Atayal)	90,631	One of the nine ethnic groups officially recognized by the Ethnology Research Office of National Taiwan University in 1948.
Bunun	58,711	
Pinuyumayan (Puyuma)	14,279	
Drekay (Rukai)	13,368	
Cou (Tso'u)	6,653	
SaiSiyat	6,644	
Tao	4,620	One of the nine ethnic groups officially recognized by the Ethnology Research Office of National Taiwan University in 1948. Formerly known as the Yami, the name of the group has now been changed to Tao.
Thao	792	Originally classified as Tsou, the group was included on August 8, 2001.
Kebalan (Kavalan)	1,477	Originally classified as Ami, the group was included on December 25, 2002.
Truku (Taro)	31,689	Originally classified as Atayal, the group was included on January 14, 2004.
Sakizaya	947	Originally classified as Ami, the group was included on January 17, 2007.
Seediq	10,115	Originally classified as Atayal, the group was included on April 23, 2008.
Hla'alua (Saaroa)	403	Located in the Taoyuan and Namasa Districts of Kaohsiung City and originally classified as Southern Tsou, and legally recognized on June 26, 2014.
Kanakanavu	340	Living in the area of Namasa District, Kaohsiung City. Originally classified as Southern Tsou, and legally recognized on June 26, 2014.

The rituals also embody the enormous spiritual symbolism that is part of the aboriginal culture. "The aboriginal people believe that all things are spiritual, and the sorcerer is usually responsible for communicating with the gods." The people believe that the ancestors have a direct influence on their lives, good or bad. Indigenous people believe that the ancestral spirits live in the mountains, and protect the crops for the tribes, so they are most revered by the aborigines.

This shows the distinctiveness of the ethnic spirit of the diverse aboriginal cultures.

As mentioned earlier, each aboriginal ethnic group has its own traditional rituals. Among the many and diverse rituals are the Ancestral Spirits of the Atayal and the Truku, the New Year's Festival of the Thao, the biennial Dwarf Festival (Pasta'ai) of the Saisiyat, and the Shearing Festival (Malahtangia) of the Bunun. Furthermore, there are the Tsai tribe's War Festival (Mayasvi), the Shahru's Bei Shen Festival (Miatungusu), the Rukai's Millet Harvest Festival (Tsatsapipianu), the Ami's Sea Festival (Misacpo) and the Harvest Festival (Malalikit). The Puyuma have their Monkey Festival (Mangayangayaw) and Big Hunting Festival (Mangayaw) every five years. Each year, there is the "Year of the Harvest Festival"; the "Autumn Festival" and "Sea Festival" of the Amis. The Dawu people celebrate the Flying Fish Festival (Mivanwa) and the New Boat Festival (Mapabosbos). The Night Festival of the Pingpu tribes has gradually been revived.

In addition, the important rituals of the Puyuma include "Sea Festival", "Monkey Festival" for men, and "Hay Harvest Festival" for women. The La Aruwa believe that the ancestral spirits are attached to the collection of Bezhu, so there is a "Bei Shen Festival" (Miatungusu). The Zou people have "War Festival" (Mayasvi) and "Harvest Festival".

The diverse traditional rituals contribute in no small measure to the richness and distinctiveness of the aboriginal culture and the strong ethnic identity of the various population groups in Taiwan. A summary is given of the rituals that have persisted through the ages, as well as the extent to which the mountains, the sea and the natural environment have contributed to the cultural wisdom of the aboriginal people.

The lives of the Atayal people are controlled by the "gaga" (the ancestral teachings). These include all rites of passage such as birth, naming, marriage, death and the rituals associated with day-to-day activities, such as hunting, weaving, tattooing, and childbearing. Other rituals are associated with social norms, such as tribal farming, revenge and inheritance of rights. [3]

The Taiwan Atayal people live in the central and northern mountainous areas of Central Taiwan, from Puli to the north of Hualien County with a population of approximately 89,958 (statistical data from March 2007). They live mainly by hunting and growing crops on burned-out mountain fields. The people are also very well known for their weaving skills. The woven fabric with its complex patterns has exquisite colors, the most predominant of which is red. This color, associated with blood, is deemed to ward off evil.

In the Ayatal creation mythology, the original ancestors were a brother and sister who lived for a very long time between heaven and earth. However, after the flood, the brother and sister were troubled and unable to have children. The sister decided to paint her face to disguise who she was from her brother after which they had children and ensured the continuation of the tribe. However, now there are strong taboos against cognation marriage. (Table 2)

**\* Table 2. The chronology of the aboriginal age ceremonies (refer to the original national information**

resources network <http://www.tipp.org.tw/tribecalendar.asp>)  
 (https://eng.taiwan.net.tw/m1.aspx?sNo=0002023) [4]

Month	Indigenous people	Indigenous Ceremonies	Festival	Atayal Smyus Festival
				Important content and ceremony
1	Saaroa	Miatungusu	Participants	Males only. According to tradition, women may not participate in ancestral festivals.
2	Puyuma	Union Amiyan	Location	The various tribes host the festival in turn.
	Tao	mivanwa 、 mivanwa	Time	4 a.m., every August 31.
	Tsou	Mayasvi	Festival refreshments	Wine, millet cakes, crops, fruit, fish, etc. Bacon may not be eaten at the festival.
3	Tao	mivanwa 、 mivanwa	Funeral oration	The main singer chants sacred words: "Ancestral ancestors! Ancestors! Today the people who worship you are in a serious mood. May the ancestors greet Jiana, and we sincerely invite all the ancestors to gather and share the gifts. Festival....."
4	Bunun	Malahtangia		"Ancestral ancestors, we bring crops that have been cultivated this year. Every member of the family has acted according to the ancestral teachings (gaga) and has worked hard. We are your people, and we look forward to your blessing next year. Now, we are joyfully celebrating."
	SaiSiyat	pitaza 、 'Oemowazka kawas	spirit	The ancestral spirits are thanked for their gifts and the speaker reports to the ancestors on the tribe's life during the past year. They promise to abide by the traditional culture of the ancestral training and gaga, and ask the ancestors to give the tribe health and happiness.
	Thao	Mulalu pisaza	Taboos	1. The ceremony must be completed before dawn. The tribe believes that the ancestors will come and participate in the festival at dawn. 2. Women are not allowed to participate in the ceremony.
5	Bunun	Malahtangia		
	Amis	Fishing festival		
	SaiSiyat	pas-taai		
	Tao	mivanwa		
6	Amis	Fishing festival		
	SaiSiyat	pas-taai		
	Tao	mivanwa 、 Mapasamorang so piyavean		
7	Puyuma	Misacpo'		
	Kavalan	Laligi		
	Amis	Malalikit		
	Paiwan	Masalut		
	Kebalan	Qataban		
8	Amis	Malalikit		
	Atayal	maho		
	Thao	mulalu tuza		
	Tsou	Homeyaya		
	Rukai	Kalabecengane		
	Paiwan	Harvest festival		
9	Amis	Malalikit		
	Thao	Lus'an		
	Paiwan	Harvest festival		
10	Paiwan	Five-years Ceremony		
	Taroko	Mgay Bari		
	Kanakanavu	Mikong		
11	Rukai	Tabesengane		
	SaiSiyat	Pasta'ai 、 pas-taai		
	Atayal	maho		
12	Puyuma	mangayangayaw 、 mangayaw 、 gilabus		
	SaiSiyat	pas-taai		

**The Atayal Festival Culture in Taiwan's Aboriginal Literature**

Among the Atayal traditions and customs are the unique patterns on their faces, their music played on a mouth harp and their hip-hop form of dancing. The Atayal social organization conforms to ancestral rituals, the most important of which is the Thanksgiving ritual (Figure 1,2,3), which is held on August 31<sup>st</sup> at four o'clock in the morning. (Table 3)



Fig. 1. Atayal festival and ritual activities

\* Table 3. Atayal Smyus Festival



Fig. 2. Atayal Festival expert interview



Fig. 3. Atayal Festival expert interview

Last month, Lao Taiya who was in his 90s, propped up his body and shouted: "No children have come to see me for a long time!" The children were in the city, like rogues who had abandoned their hometown. Old Atayal's eyes stretched far and wide, as if it were the light of compassion. Am I a ronin. [5]

### Conclusion

The research methods on the digitalization of ceremonial culture in Taiwan's aboriginal literature comprise eight innovative research threads: in-depth problem awareness; multi-disciplinary consultation; extensive information collection; digital humanities cross-border; steps to implement research methods into teaching and research development of two-track information cross-border; text field adjustment; strategy for improving teaching and research improvement; and multi-product development. These are shown in the figure below:

(1) In-depth problem awareness – identify research issues: the development of tribal ceremonies in aboriginal ethnic groups.

(2) Multi-disciplinary consultation – discuss preliminary plans with relevant parties: project hosts and co-hosts, scholars and experts, students, tribal elders, interviewees, etc.

(3) Extensive information collection – refer to relevant literature: search and induction analysis, historical literature review of text narratives and literature on aboriginal culture.

(4) Digital humanity cross-border – hold joint discussions to determine the research methods (observation, interviews, questionnaires, photographs, audio recordings, videos, documentaries, texts and literature analysis, etc.), and show the

specific results of the "humanization of humanities" process.

(5) Two-track information cross-border – collect data, text narratives and literature on the culture of the aboriginal rituals, and collect digital information in actual textual teaching and tribal ritual fieldwork practice.

(6) Text field adjustment – during actual text teaching, summarize the text narratives and literature of the aboriginal ritual culture, and analyzing the digital information collected by the tribal ritual fieldwork practice.

(7) Teaching and research improvement strategy – present a research report with suggestions on improvements that can be made to the text narratives and literature materials of the aboriginal culture of the actual text teaching, the digital information collected by the tribal ritual field research practice and the inductive analysis of teaching practice. The research report will offer strategies to improve action research aiming to enhance teaching practices and results.

(8) Multiple results presentation – finally, share experiences and present the concrete results of teaching practice and action research. These will be presented in a multi-modal model of teaching research results, such as the aboriginal festival cultural documentary contest film festival, teaching achievement exhibition research results exchange, sharing of talks, etc.

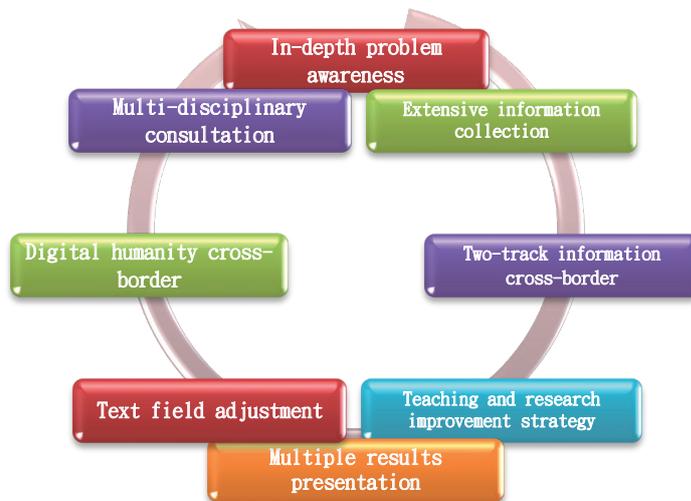


Fig. 4 Research Threads

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