

Sakizaya's Name Rectification Campaign under the Perspective of Cultural Construction

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ABSTRACT

After the KMT succeeded the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan in 1945, officials continued to apply the then current method of categorizing Taiwanese aborigines into nine groups. Since the 1980's, though, many aboriginal groups have launched name rectification campaigns and have called for 'independence' from their originally designated groups. The occurrence of various name rectification campaigns not only sheds light on the inadequacies of the old system of categorization, but also reflects the rise of the aborigines' own awareness. The Sakizaya's Name Rectification Campaign can be observed in this context.

Dutch records from the 17th century identify the Sakizaya as a distinct group different from the Amis people. The decline of the Sakizaya was initiated by the Jia-Li-Wan event in 1878. After defeat by Ching soldiers the Sakizaya obscured their identities by mixing themselves among the Amis. When the Japanese started their ethnographic research in the early 20th century, the Sakizaya had become relatively "Amis-ized," and were regarded as a sub-branch of the Amis for both academic and official purposes. The Sakizaya's new ethnic group movement was initiated in 1990. On January 17, 2007 the Sakizaya gained official recognition as an independent aboriginal group.

Rather than focusing on the government's procedures of ethnic group identification, this paper intends to investigate the strategies of movement

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activists. It not only examines the concept of cultural construction but also explains why this concept is so important in understanding the case of Sakizaya. Furthermore it interprets two major constructions in this campaign. The first one is the so called 'traditional costumes', which were invented as a distinguishing ethnic symbol. The second one is Palamal (the Fire God Ritual). On the basis of using the symbol of fire, this ritual serves to recall participants' historical memory of ancestors who died in the Jia-Li-Wan event and reinforce their Sakizaya identity at the same time.

Keywords: Sakizaya, Name Rectification Campaign, ethnics, cultural construction, 'traditional costumes', Palamal (the Fire God Ritual).

