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The Embodiment of Time and Space in the Koah-hiun () Procession of Saikang, Tainan

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Graduate Institute of Taiwan Studies - Chang Jung Christian University

南瀛歷史、社會與文化 III

Nanying history, society and culture III

葉春榮 主編

變遷中的南瀛宗教

Religion in Transformation in the Tainan Area



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The Embodiment of Time and Space in the Koah-hiuⁿ (刈香) Procession of Saikang (西港), Tainan

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The Saikang Koah-hiuⁿ (西港刈香) festival has been performed every three years since 1784 and has been celebrated without interruption, despite facing dramatic challenges and undergoing notable changes.⁽¹⁾ These features show quite a remarkable temporal depth in the Han Chinese religious development in Taiwan. Moreover, the festival takes place in the hinterland of Tainan, site of the first massive immigration from China and the first large-scale contact with Austronesians, and covers a vast region when viewed from the perspective of a daily life span and basic human physical mobility. Other rituals, also called *Koah-hiuⁿ*, are celebrated in the neighboring areas; likewise, each of them delimits its ritual borders and circumscribes a specific territory.

Saikang's festival honors Chhian-Soe-ia (千歲爺), a generic term that designates Twelve Kings of Epidemics (Chap-ji Un-ong 十二瘟王) —also called the “Envoys of Heaven for a Tour of Inspection” (Tai-thian-sun-siu 代天巡狩)— invited to come in rotation to this area, in groups of three, every three years. In the company of local protective gods they are urged to accomplish the triple task of exorcising, pacifying, and blessing the territory and its inhabitants. They reside at Kheng-an-kiong (慶安宮), in Saikang village. The festival requires several months of preparation. Its climax lasts six

(1) One interruption seems to have taken place in 1943, during the Japanese presence on Taiwan, due to the turmoil caused by the Pacific War.

days and comprises distinct ritual performances, executed by different types of officiants, taking place at the same time but in different locations with several temporal junctions, such as a Taoist service, *Ong-chio* (王醮), a “Ceremony celebrating the Kings in their ‘palace’,” *Ong-hu kho-gi* (王府科儀), a four-day territorial procession, *Koah-hiu* (刈香), preceded by the “invitation of the Goddess Matsu [to participate in the ritual],” *Chhia* Ma-cho (請媽祖), and followed by the burning of the King’s Boat, *Sio-ong-chun* (燒王船), and a “ritual of Universal Salvation,” *Pho-to* (普渡) (See appendix 1). This paper mainly focuses on the *Koah-hiu* ritual, which name is also utilized by the locals to designate the entire festival. They call it the “Saikang Koah-hiu” (西港刈香) or “Saikang-a-Hiu” (西港仔香), since it is the ritual action in which they actively participate in the greatest numbers. The preparation of the festival is punctuated by various rites, in relation to the building of the sacred Boat, the Royal Palace and to the troupes of the procession, in particular. This preparation operates also a transformation of the usual space and time of Kheng-an-kiong. The main hall of the temple is decorated and converted into a “Royal Palace,” *Ong-hu* (王府) to host the Kings, and several other sections are dedicated to their envoys and assistants. As soon as the construction of the Boat starts, from seven o’clock in the evening to the following morning twenty-four past five, a drum called *keng-ko* (更鼓) is beaten to mark the five traditional “night watches” and their subdivisions.

The processional trajectory goes through the local territory and all its temples, whereas the cortege draws thousands of social actors gathered in villages’ “formations,” *hiu-tin* (香陣), each composed of a “processional troupe,” *tin-thau* (陣頭) standing at the front, and a “palanquin,” *sin-kio* (神轎) posted at the rear. Participation in this ritual is not voluntary but prescribed by residency in a “localized cult community.” The household is the basic unit of worship, the basic accounting unit for financing the procession, and of most activities related to the village temple. Each household is also supposed to mandate a male representative in the village formation that will actively participate in the different tasks in relation to the palanquin and the troupe. Having started with thirteen villages more than two hundred years ago with It-tek-kiong (懿德宮) (today’s Ko-ma-kiong (姑媽宮)) as a geographic center, the procession now incorporates around 90 cult communities (with Kheng-an-kiong as a focal center for the celebration), thus reaching an inner limit in terms of space and time.

Saikang’s multilayered ritual can be tackled from numerous angles, for instance

from the angles of its symbolic representations and structure, its socio-religious organization, its diachronic development, its local cultural identity construction, its social functions and expressions of power, or its managerial and entrepreneurial endeavors. This empirical object is also particularly well-suited to be scrutinized from the revealing structural categories of time and space, and these constitute the starting point from where the present discussion will be launched. Indeed, the history of the ritual informs the broader history of the region and the development of local society. The temporal framework of the celebration is totally different from that of today's larger society. Collective and ritual memories are interlaced with the geographic transformations of the area. The procession ties a direct bond with the physical environment and delimits a non-official territory. In earlier writings, I have examined the construction of a sense of place and the formation of collective memory through this ritual and studied their implications on the construction of local identity (F. Allio, 1996, 1998). Furthermore, the execution of this type of ritual entails a material and symbolic scheme to be put in place, including an internal fabric of time and space, which in turn reflects central ideas on time and space in Taiwan's religious culture. These two issues will be of principal concern here. The discussion will principally draw on ethnographic data collected since 1988, and twenty-five years of experience and interactions with local people.

Time and space are two basic notions used by humans to structure their experiences and constitute two essential pillars supporting the interpretative framework of human existence and collective order. Indissolubly entwined, time and space do not exist in absolute terms. The two categories are elaborated in abstraction to circumscribe the empirical perception of temporal flux and spatial layout. Their delimitation, representation, and organization differ according to civilizations and cultural systems. In contemporary Taiwan, they are particularly complex and sophisticated, but also multilayered, with local, Chinese, and Western influences.

This paper intends to examine the spatiotemporal experience of local people in the circumstances of the accomplishment of a ritual such as that of the *Koah-hiu*ⁿ, and to explore the particular inner elaboration of time and space in the procession. How did this religious event, deeply rooted in the locality, performed on a regular basis for more than two centuries and intimately connecting both mundane and sacred spaces, affect the locals, the pace of their lives as well as their movements? How do these repeated

and accumulated experiences, these gestures inherited from ancestors, condition their perception of time and space? There are good reasons to believe that people in other parts of Taiwan may have different conceptions of time and space, due to a different religious, cultural and cognitive baggage.

In its conclusive remarks, this paper will evoke the evolution of the perception of the time and space paradigms in modern times, such as the new relations established with traditions inherited from the past and included in processes of heritagization, and with a territory now discerned and depicted through the prism of new technological means.

Historical Line and Geographic Range: The Development of a Large-scale Ritual

One of the specificities of this type of ritual performance relies on the fact that it involves the coordination of dozens of communities organized as localized cult entities, which envision themselves collectively and in connection with a supernatural order, as opposed to a celebration circumscribed within the scale of a single community and temple. These contiguous communities are equal segments in the procession, as opposed to other chains of cult entities, ranked in symbolic hierarchy, with mother temples at the top and subsidiary temples below. In Saikang, each communal participant is important to all others. Among communities, location, orientation, and respective distance, as well as historic formation, may vary, but within the sacred time and space of the processional ritual they coexist in the same particular position and are intensely related, forming a unique body, facing a common fate, acting with a common voice and gesture. Each formation visits all other communities and all communities engage in ceremonial exchanges.

A geographical feature characterizes the region of Saikang that is quite unique and interesting. The morphology and the hydraulics of its environment changed dramatically from the first quarter of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, conditioning the occupation of space, the exploitation of natural resources, settlement, lifestyles, and traditions. The most critical point is that these disruptions, although challenging to a great extent the ritual territorial body, such as raising physical obstacles in-between ritual sub-areas, or causing the change of the symbolic geographic center of the territory, did not stop the continuation of the *Koah-hiu*ⁿ celebration.

However, the study of the ritual reveals that the elaboration of collective memory, the formation of local identity, as well as the very performance of the procession keep a record of these challenges and transformations.

Turmoil repeatedly occurred in the region, mostly due to the lower Tsengwen River (曾文[溪]) which, one hundred and ninety years ago radically changed course, generating huge geomorphic and hydrologic transformations of the region and of the Taijiang Lagoon (台江[內海]). Until the early eighteenth century, the lagoon occupied more than a half of today's processional territory. The present-day vicinity of Saikang stretches in the northern part of the former lagoon. Saikang includes in its name the term "harbor" because it was situated along the shoreline of the lagoon, so it was not a maritime harbor. On this northern shoreline, to the west, another inner harbor, called Ham-sai-kang (含[蚶]西港), which takes also part in the Saikang *Koah-hiu*", played a larger role than that of Saikang itself in the commerce of grains and merchandise transported by ships which were able to dock in the hinterland. It is said that two thousands households populated Ham-sai-kang at the time, forming a pair with another major lagoon harbor, Tit-ka-lang (直加弄), today's Anding (安定), located much further east. Both communities still worship the Great-Emperor-Who-Protects-Life (Baosheng dadi 保生大帝). However, during the summer season of 1823, the activities and the fate of Saikang, Ham-sai-kang, and Tit-ka-lang, just like those of dozens of other villages and exchange piers in this area, were dramatically changed in a very short time. A huge typhoon loaded the Tsengwen River —at the time known as the Wanli River (灣裡[溪])— with sediments, mud and timber from the mountains, which, after accumulating and forming a natural intake barrage at the point of its most important bend towards northwest, eventually provoked the reorientation of the river towards southwest, and forced it directly into the lagoon. Huge amounts of alluvium continued to fill up this inner sea, accelerating its drying-up which had slowly started before and, in the end, metamorphosed inexorably the whole region. Settlements and later villages appeared on the lands that emerged from this process. One may recall that a large portion of today's localized cult communities composing the Saikang's *Koah-hiu*" territory, in the southern, southwestern, and western parts, came to existence this way. Over time, each of these local communities, as older ones did before, delimited and organized their own symbolic space, oriented according to cardinal points, posting supernatural battalions at peripheries, building in their centers shelters dedicated to

protective gods, which later became beautiful temples,.

The situation after the emergence of new lands drew many opportunity-seekers. Several conflicts sparked among different interest groups, firstly for economic reasons, then for authority or identity claims, soon finding expression in the domain of religion where they could mine on lots of symbolic resources and, of course, more precisely in that of the procession, in direct connection to the territory. The well known competition between the Kuo (郭) surname group and the Huang (黃) surname group finds its origin in this situation. In the postwar period, this opposition was transposed into a bi-factional system for local elections, which in turn fell into disuse with the democratization of Taiwan. To this date, this rivalry, although less active, is still being displayed in the procession in many significant ways. The most interesting aspect however is how the two groups, ever since the beginning, have put aside their most salient disagreements in order to both participate in the ritual, but at the same time, have succeeded in expressing their opposition. The ritual is an enduring stronghold and suitable stage for these kinds of symbolic displays.

After its reorientation, the Tsengwen River disturbed the area several times again, until its stem was mastered in the 1930s by the Japanese, with the construction of a first dike.⁽²⁾ Floods, starting with the 1823 flood, and to a lesser extend, the great works during the Japanese period had dramatic consequences for villages, residents, and the performance of the processional ritual, especially in affecting territorial organization. The main change was the shift of geographic center, point of daily departures and returns for the procession, but also location of the Kings of Epidemics' residence during their visit.

Today, the general layout and unfolding of the festival give the impression of being in place ever since the beginnings. But, from different points of view, this is not the case. At the outset, the geographic center of the ritual area that included thirteen communities was at Ko-ma-kiong, located in what is now the eastern section of the overall territory. Unfortunately, Ko-ma-kiong and its eponymous village were destroyed by the 1823 flood, and their survivors suffered soon after from an outbreak, with the result of dislocating part of the cult community. At the time, twenty-four villages, including that

(2) The very interesting master thesis of Fang Shu-mei (1992), also a native of the Saikang region, illustrates in details these changes.

of Saikang-a, to the west, participated in the festival.⁽³⁾ The temple of Saikang took over from Ko·ma·kiong, most probably in 1826, for the occurrence following the flood of the summer of 1823. Later, more villages located to the west of Saikang-a, the new geographical center, joined the alliance, and the total number rose up to thirty-six. As the land claimed over the lagoon expanded southwestward, southward, and westward, and as the inhabitants of destroyed villages or cultivated lands relocated, the number of participating communities increased continuously, up to seventy-two, seventy-eight. According to the handbook published by Kheng-an-kiong, the festival currently draws ninety-six communities together (See appendix 2).

Over time, the content of the festival became more and more complex. Supplementary rituals were added to the original ones which, most probably, consisted just to a “Tour of Inspection by Heaven’s Envoys” —that is a procession—, as specified by the formal name of the Kings of Epidemics, Tai-thian-sun-siu, to ceremonious offerings during their stay —succinct form of what became the Ceremonial in the Royal Palace—, and to the building of a small size Kings’ Boat for their return to Heaven. Even with these basic endeavors, the celebration was certainly considered for the time much more complex and extraordinary than regular temple festivals or pilgrimages. Several rituals of great magnitude taking place today, such as the “Ceremony celebrating the Kings in their Palace,” and the Taoist service, were in fact added later (respectively from 1826 to 1848 and in 1847). In 1940, the three-day *Koah-hiu*ⁿ processional ritual started to be preceded by another procession, going westward, toward the sea and Tho·siaⁿ-a (土城仔), for the “Invitation of Matsu.”⁽⁴⁾ At the outset, the scale of this simple event was small, with few participating communities; it is now very large and includes all the communities of the *Koah-hiu*ⁿ. One has to add that after the rite of invitation is completed, by noon at the latest, the communities start the formal *Koah-hiu*ⁿ procession, heading toward the first territorial section, situated on the southwest and west part of the ritual territory.

(3) The detail of the origin and early evolution of the festival can be read on the main stele of Ko·ma·kiong (姑媽宮), in Peh-hun (八份), entitled: *Xigang Bafen yuchi kaiji Guma gong yange* (西港八份玉勅開基姑媽宮沿革).

(4) In 1964, the ritual of invitation switched to the nearby temple in Macho·-keng-a Thian-ho· kiong (媽祖宮仔天后宮)

From Secular to Sacred Temporal Regime (and Vice Versa)

The ritual follows a specific representation of time, shaped by culture in a broader sense, and religion in particular. In Saikang, as elsewhere, to perform a ritual means to conform with a specific temporal regime, different from that of the Gregorian calendar adopted by the Republic of China at its founding —yet with a year numbering system starting from 1912 and not the *Anno Domini*—, the *guoli* (國歷), governing official events, public activities, as well as economic life in Taiwan, and determining different intervals. Popular religion instead is still ruled by a lunisolar calendar, *nongli* (農曆) or *yinli* (陰曆) and a cyclical time calculation. The lunisolar calendar is manifested by twelve lunar months (including sometimes intercalary months) and twenty-four seasonal markers.

Translating Time Calculation into Local Ritual Action

In the first years of my extensive fieldwork in the region of Saikang, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, while living with host families in different villages and conducting research on temples and religious life, it was easy to completely lose track of the official calendar because people broadly used the traditional calendar for all aspects of their daily life. Today people still use this calendar for religious matters and events, be they collective, such as temple fairs, or private, such as weddings and funerals. For other issues, both calendars are used, but interlocutors constantly have to ask for precisions: “*guoli* or *nongli*?” The younger generations tend to use almost exclusively the official calendar, otherwise they make the date in question clear by adding spontaneously “*nongli*” to it. Dates in written materials published by temples or cult organizations would never refer to the official calendar exclusively. This would be puzzling and confusing to people, because they memorize important events related to gods’ birthdays and rituals with the lunisolar calendar. Also, the entire year is still generally conceived according to traditional celebrations and feasts, especially to the landmark dates of the Lunar New Year and the Mid-autumn Festival, helping to wedge other particular events, before and after.

The flow of years calculation in the traditional calendar relies on a stem-branch or sexagenary (60-year) cycle, also called the *jiazi* (甲子) cycle, after the name of the first year of the cycle. It combines each of the ten Heavenly Stems (*tiangan* 天干), with each of the twelve Earthly Branches (*dizhi* 地支), to obtain sixty revolving pairs. Everyone

still masters this system today, and even more so divination practitioners, but also historians, since the *jiazi* cycle was used to sequence emperors' reigns. Before being applied to years, the 60-pair cycle was used to count the days as attested in oracle bones of the Shang era, and after the years it started to be also used to number lunar months.

In Taiwan, people know which pair of the *jiazi* cycle identifies the current year for it is commonly written and spoken around the Lunar New Year. In Saikang, as well as in other temple fairs, the stem-branch designation of the year is also used to speak of the occurrence of the ritual. For instance, the last four triennial Saikang's "ritual occurrences / celebrations" *ke* (科), were named: *guiwei ke* (癸未科) for 2003, *bingxu ke* (丙戌科) for 2006, *jichou ke* (己丑科) for 2009, and *renchen ke* (壬辰科) for 2012. Under this pattern, four terms of the twelve Earthly Branches constantly reappear in the list of the ritual years, given that the celebration is triennial and the Branches series is a multiple of three. They are: *wei* (未), *xu* (戌), *chou* (丑), and *chen* (辰). Expressions such as "this is a *chen ke*," or "such and such event happened on the *xu ke*" are often heard. There is an even more simple and popular way —principally among older people— to distinguish the year of a ritual occurrence that brings into play the cyclic system of the "twelve signs of belonging," (*shi'er shuxiang* 十二屬相), used very commonly to situate people's year of birth in a scale of twelve elements named according the Chinese twelve zodiacal animals. The four animals associated with these years are the Goat in 2003 (*wei* year), the Dog in 2006 (*xu* year), the Ox in 2009 (*chou* year), and the Dragon in 2012 (*chen* year). For instance, this is visible in the manuscript used by the processional troupe of Tang-tek-na (東竹林) village, the "Ox and the Plough Song," (*Gu-le-a koah* 牛犁仔歌). It is also interesting to note that the representation of the twelve animals of the zodiac is always included in the colorful decoration of the Royal Boat, in resonance with the years of birth of the entire population. An important element to recall is that the Twelve Kings of Epidemics are thought to rotate for their processional "inspection" in four groups of three. Thus, each King is theoretically connected to one of the twelve Earthly Branches and one animal of the zodiac. Within a contemporaneous group of kings, the god associated with the on-going year becomes the Main King (Toa-ong 大王), while the Second King (Ji-ong 二王) and Third King (Saⁿ-ong 三王), are related respectively with the next two years. According to the same logic, the Main Kings among the list of twelve are always the same four: Feng (封) for a *wei* year, Lu (廬) for a *xu* year, Yu (余) for a *chou* year, and Wu (吳) for a *chen* year. In reality, this twelve-year

cycle and these series of four years and three years form a sub-framework of calculation as efficient and maybe more important for the categorization of the ritual features and concrete acts than the sixty-year cycle.

Ultimately two *embedded* cycles coexist in Saikang. The denominations referring to the sexagenary cycle connect local events to a higher-level scale: that of the cosmological order of the universe, as well as that of the country and its monarchs. The abridged scales as for them set the tempo of local rhythms according to human celebrations and the choice of supernatural determinants. Furthermore, while a sixty-year period corresponds traditionally to the length of a canonical human life and while people envision the age of an interlocutor by knowing his or her zodiacal animal sign, in Saikang, the *Koah-hiu*ⁿ occurrences punctuates one's life in some other way: the unit *ke* (科) is also used to count the number of participations in the festival by the locals, marking the vigor of their dedication. Many events that occurred at a personal or collective level are situated according to this three-year scale.

The ordinary lunar year is composed of twelve months of twenty-nine or thirty days each. A month starts on the day of a new moon, and ends the day before the next moon. The month of the year in which the Saikang festival is celebrated is always the Fourth Lunar Month, also called "Plum Month", *meiyue* (梅月), in the list of the traditional lunar months' denominations, while the apex of the celebration must include the 15th day of the Fourth Lunar Month, set in Saikang as the collective anniversary date of the Twelve Kings of Epidemics. The year 2012 was particular in that it included a thirteen month in the lunar year, called an "intercalary month," *runyue* (閏月), coming right after the regular Fourth Lunar Month. In this situation, the ritual was celebrated during the first of the two Fourth Lunar Months, because, as local people said, it is not auspicious to celebrate this kind of ritual during a *runyue*.

The Chinese calendar considers that the period between two winter solstices constitutes the solar year (*sui* 歲), which in turn is divided into twenty-four markers (*qi* 氣) that indicate solstices and equinoxes, the beginning of the seasons, as well as important terms that provide guidance for agricultural work. The apex of the Saikang celebration is generally situated between two markers: "summer begins," *lixia* (立夏) and "grain partially full," *xiaoman* (小滿).

The period of the mid-Fourth Lunar Month is at the junction of two crucial climatic phases, at the end of a very warm period, which lasted several weeks, and prior

to the Plum Rain season, *meiyuji* (梅雨季), that usually lasts from May to June in Taiwan. The people of the region of Tainan recite a rhyme showing the link between their agricultural activities and this particular period of the year: “Approaching the Saikang *Koah-hiu*ⁿ, better stop grating sweet potatoes” (*Sai-kang-a-hiu*ⁿ *na beh koah, han-chi to m-bian chhoah*, 西港仔香如欲刈番薯都不免擦). This rhyme explains how the date of this religious event announces up-coming humidity, making it impossible to sundry food for preservation. Sweet potatoes formed the basis of locals’ diet in the old days; rice became prevalent in the sixties and the seventies. Paddies fields at this stage of the year are almost ready for harvest and grains turn yellow. Older peasants explained to me that the period of the *Koah-hiu*ⁿ celebration itself corresponded to a short interval between two important periods of local labor: growing paddies and waiting for the full ripeness of grains, while hoping that no excessive rain would ruin all their efforts. The Plum Rain season is followed by a torrid summer with the accompanying typhoons and consequent floods. A few weeks after the celebration, comes the Duanwu Festival, Duanwu *jie* (端午節), announcing the summer’s heat in the calendar. Several observances on this day are also meant to safeguard humans against pestilences, a theme that the festival’s symbols abundantly elaborate upon, showing an analogy between those two customs.

If there exists a traditional abstract partition of a Lunar Month it is not in weeks of seven days, like in the Gregorian calendar, but in three “decades,” *xun* (旬), or ten-day weeks: *shangxun* (上旬); *zhongxun* (中旬); *xiaxun* (下旬). Each day of the decade may also be designated with the ten Heavenly Stems. People usually refer to the period of the month during which something is to be accomplished by situating it in one of these decades. However, the pace of the seven-day week is more and more commonly taken into consideration to set various temporal aspects of the celebration. Nowadays, the lives of many participants are more and more influenced by jobs in the industrial and service sectors of the economy or schools and exams for the younger ones, and less and less by agricultural activities or even piecework assignments from nearby small and medium enterprises, once carried out at home at one’s own pace. The ritual schedule tries not to interfere too much with the working days at factories, offices, or schools in order to limit the number of days people need to take off to perform ritual duties. One of the most visible adaptations has been to place the last days of the procession—requiring the major and lengthy involvement—during a weekend. The consequence of

this is also that the initial rite, the invitation of the Kings, falls in the middle of the week, on a Wednesday. In sum, since the apogee of the ritual cycle lasts six days, it is manageable to make this period coincide both with a weekend and with the Kings' anniversary on the 15th day of the Fourth Lunar Month. Another consideration in so doing is to facilitate the return of the locals who have moved away or are working far away, as well as the long-distance trips of the guests coming to attend the banquets held by local families the day the procession passes through their villages.

Some thought has been put in the last ten or more years on the additional religious visitors the weekend is attracting toward the central temple, Kheng-an-kiong —where the Kings of Epidemics are temporarily hosted—, making possible a “competition” with the other religious sites of the region. But this does not mean that the temple wants to become a tourist attraction scene, because time and space are almost totally occupied by the performance of the ritual program and its heavy logistical needs. For the time being Kheng-an-kiong, mining on its increasing notoriety and subsequent earnings, is trying to entertain the flow of outsiders during day-time by organizing processional troupes' shows in front of its main doors, taking some liberties with the tradition requiring that the troupes keep busy along the route and temples of the day. At night outsiders are spontaneously attracted along the way to watch the return of the cortege.

Traditionally, the auspicious dates and hours for the ritual preparation and the ritual holding are set by divination after the Kings' instructions or rely on the indications given by a local diviner, also a specialist in geomancy. Besides, in my personal experience, when I started observing the Saikang ritual in 1988, the dates and hours for the rite called “opening the area of apprenticeship” (*khui-kuan* 開館), for instance, performed at the central temple Keng-an-kiong by all the processional troupes prepared in villages and consisting in an extensive demonstration, were preeminently decided by gods through intuitive divination like trance or by checking auspicious days in the traditional almanac, regardless of whether they fell on a Monday, a Wednesday, or any day of the week. Nowadays, most of the rites of “opening the area of apprenticeship” take place during the weekends, when participants have more “free time.” To the point that the troupes' schedules are often overlapping and the plaza in front of Kheng-an-kiong where the non-martial troupes perform this *khui-kuan* is easily over crowded, while martial troupes are sometimes obliged to change or adjust their timing. Nowadays, we start seeing a few troupes executing this rite in the afternoon of

weekends whereas it has to be traditionally done in the morning.

The choice of a precise hour for the performance of a rite tends to remain entirely traditional, that is by divination. One day is subdivided into twelve periods (*shi* 時), of two hours each, also named after the Earthly Branches. For example the *choushi* (丑時), first period of the day, starts at 11 p.m. and ends at 1 a.m. Another division operates during the day in what concerns worship practices, to be executed whether in the morning, in the afternoon, or in the evening. Each period entails its own symbolic ascriptions. For example, the morning recipients of offerings are divinized spirits, afternoon offerings go to wandering ghosts or gods' soldiers posted at the villages' boundary-markers and at their centers, while the late evening and night are ascribed to communicate with Heaven. However, it is interesting to note that during the festival, because each segment of the supernatural world is convened or summoned —except for ancestors—, and due to the length and intensity of the program, every sequence of the day is fully exploited —mornings, afternoons, evenings, nights— producing the impression of a non-stop process.

Once the precise date and time of a religious activity is set —despite weather, fatigue, or individual difficulties— participants must and do act as decided in accordance with the gods. It seems absolutely impossible, unlike civic life events, to postpone or cancel any rite on account of inclement weather or for any human reasons. I have never witnessed a rite beginning late. In fact, a rite often begins a little earlier, as if being late would be inauspicious and starting ahead of time a formula for success.

The Symbolic and Social Meaning of Regularity and Cyclicity

If the origination of the ritual in 1784 is explained with the discovery of a Royal Boat and through a sequence of human decisions⁽⁵⁾, its occurrence, taking place every three years, although regular and cyclical, is not obvious at all and not clarified either. The basic beliefs still applying to the celebration help us understand the reason for accomplishing a ritual in relation to the Kings of Epidemics, apparently both in their honor and in fear of their retaliation in case of neglect. The fact of repeating it and, above all, perpetuating it until today surely has implied further symbolic justifications as well as specific social dispositions within local society.

(5) As it has been reported, for instance, on the stele located at Ko-ma-kiang (see footnote 3).

One could take the regularity of the system for granted, and find the calculation described above —each main King corresponds to one term of the twelve Earthly Branches, which in turn combine with ten Heavenly Stems to form a sexagenary cycle— as evident and self-explanatory. In fact this justification may well have been forged later on, and have accommodated some external constraints. Whether or not regularity was crucial —it has now become fundamental for various motives—, why acting at a cadence of three years, anyway? Is the reason religious, astral, institutional, financial, organizational, or merely fortuitous? We can easily sense that it is not natural, since no triennial cycle is inscribed in nature, and this is very telling for an agricultural society as Saikang's. Was it then in order to fit the number of twelve Royal Gods and the idea of rotation? Yet, twelve is not only divisible by three but also by other fractions, such as one, two, four, six, and twelve. So the rate could have been different from three. Different series of Kings of Epidemics or Royal Lords exist in Taiwan: the ones coming alone, or the ones associated by three, five, twelve, or in a group of three hundred sixty. Even if two series are identical, the surnames of the Kings may vary from one place of worship to the other. They do not necessarily bear a name as they appear and in some places one of the first rites of the festival cycle is meant to identify them. In fine, what is interesting in the case of Saikang is less the calculation system and its technical explanation than the sudden adoption of a cult, and the way it has been adjusted to local society, the constraints it has imposed on it, transforming it for ever, and also its influence on the locals' vision of time and space.

In this regard, several details are of special interest and can be summarized with this question: was the number of the Royal tablets symbolizing their authority, and uncovered on the first boat, conducive to the actual representation of three gods in each occurrence, and each of them presiding a year? In other words were there three or even one or twelve tablets on that boat? As we have seen, in a twelve-year cycle, only four denominations really count, and the twelve Kings, instead of being identified with their individual surname, are commonly recalled with an ordinal series: “Main King,” “Second King,” “Third King,” which practically blur further distinctions, even knowing that in theory there are four triads in rotation, and the full series of *un-ong* equals to twelve.

There is no particular hagiography or legend attached to the Twelve Kings, neither collectively nor individually. Their naming —always with two syllables—, rather seems

to be the result of a voluntary enterprise of personification and rationalization, maybe by means of divination as is still practiced today elsewhere, maybe relying on a piece of information provided by Taoists priests, as certain voices are saying, taken from their rich documentation about rituals. Was the twelve Kings pattern in use ever since the beginning? Actually, the tradition of twelve Kings in Saikang and its associated calculation system might simply derive from the adoption of a preexisting pattern, like that used at So'-ochu (蘇厝), from where the first Boat is said to come, or from a widely spread trend in Tainan. In any case, the number of the series might have been confirmed at the time locally through a divination process, and the number of tablets on the first boat might well have been limited to a single one, symbolizing anyway clearly the type of spirit involved, Kings of Pestilences coming on a boat, with a strong coercive power.

In practice, for the execution of the ritual there seems to be two coexisting approaches, that of twelve gods with a surname, more learned and sophisticated, and that of the three Kings —Chief, Second and Third—, more pragmatic and local. Each of these issues is often a subject of debate among specialists and passionate participants. The above discussion suggests not to be too easily satisfied with explanatory models and to take into consideration the variety of coexisting interpretations, referring to different regimes of knowledge and even conflicting views and agents, and finally variation over time.

The regularity and the pace of the festival demonstrate that the reasons for which it is accomplished at a symbolic level —and to a logical extend, at a social level— need to be constantly re-activated. The ritual can be performed to solve problems accumulated in the recent past to manage present-day crisis, as much as to make a difference for the near future. Although the 2003 celebration, performed during the outbreak of SARS in the whole Taiwan, had confirmed in the eyes of the locals the actuality of plagues that many thought of a vanished age, as well as the power of the Kings of Epidemics about whom it had been said they had efficiently protected all the participants, *epidemics* at large could also be seen as a metaphor for any kind of problem and danger. One can sense how efficient and complex the symbolic mechanism implied by the fear of pestilences and epidemics could be: exorcistic and prophylactic at the same time, leading to the simultaneous actions of getting rid of and preventing danger. Besides, the process of putting the Kings' Boat in the water again, as was the custom in the eighteenth century, trying to send their menace away, also meant to directly expose

bordering areas, using a different but complementary metaphor, that of contagion.

Beyond symbolic reasons, as is often noticed in other societies which chose to regularly perform a gigantic and expensive celebration, the pace of occurrences often corresponds to the time required to renew the indispensable wealth in temples and families—and then, not so paradoxically, to dissipate them again in this potlatch-like ritual. And we could think also of the time necessary to renew one's energy, when we think that the ritual takes several months to be prepared and many days to be accomplished during its apex. The Saikang triennial occurrence has become one of the characteristics of the ritual. This temporal feature could well have been emulated by other nearby areas and temples. For individuals, this short-termed regularity has an incidence too. It places them into a quasi constant involvement or expectative: the ritual has only just been completed that assessments, discussions or plans for the next one start again. As a matter of fact, this type of festival punctuates the existence of the locals throughout their entire lives. This type of ritual not only generates a collective and local history but impact also the existence and fate of individuals.

All that being said—and I have only mentioned the very basic elements of the time calculation and time vision which are directly linked with Saikang's ritual—despite the little adjustments in religious time constraints and some change in the way of life of the locals, *regularity* and *cyclicity* are clearly the two essential and prescriptive temporal characters of the festival, as opposed to event-driven and linearity frameworks.

From Natural Space to Sacred Territory (and Vice Versa)

Saikang's Living Landscape

The inner physical space of the ritual territory of Saikang is quite homogenous. Until a recent past, village units, *chng-thau* (庄頭), surrounded by arable land in a flat environment formed the characteristic landscape of the region. Apart from the sacred trees planted near temples and at villages' edges, one could rarely see trees, except sometimes bordering some roads. Starting in the early 1980s until the mid-1990s, the countryside changed noticeably, with the establishment of numerous small and medium enterprises along the country roads but also directly into small villages. Most of them have been abandoned and turned into brownfields when their owners relocated and

opened larger structures in China, in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The landscape changed also with the massive destruction of the traditional and beautiful red-brick courtyard houses, replaced with cubic and linear cement housing, like in many places in the western coast of Taiwan. Nonetheless, in comparison with the cities and their suburbs often overrun by industrial parks, the general appearance of the Saikang region remains what is still considered in Taiwan a rural area.

The limits reached by the processional cortege are not determined by natural barriers, nor variations of vegetation, cultivations or habitats, except for a portion on the east, beyond a line formed by Soaiⁿ-a-na (槎仔林), Thai-sai (太西), Ao-iaⁿ (後營), Si-liau-a (施寮仔), Tiong-sia (中社) and Soa-lop-a (砂凹仔), where laid the bed of the Wanli River before it changed orientation toward the southwest, in 1823. The Tsengwen River which now flows from east to west, changed its course several times up to the 1930s, but though dividing the northern and southern sides of the territory, never constituted a real barrier for the accomplishment of the ritual, in the sense that people always found the way to traverse it, back and forth.

Among several land development projects, that of the construction of a dam upstream and of dikes all along, to control and use the waters of the river, remains the most momentous to this region. The constructions of the Saikang Bridge and the Koxinga Bridge within the ritual territory have been important steps too. Before the two bridges were built, the reminiscences of rudimentary ferries or spots of shallow water in the river, allowing the participants of the procession and their formations to cross over, and the remembrance of some incidents while traversing, as well as some miracles which happened thanks to the intervention of the Royal Gods or local protective gods, all are still vivid episodes quite regularly recalled during interviews. The multiplication of roads and highways, while changing considerably the landscape, has facilitated the circulation on certain sections of the processional route, and have had the effect of enhancing the pace of the procession at certain moments of the day, necessitating sometimes the adjustments of the schedule.

Expressions like “the area north of the river,” *ke-pak* (溪北), and “the area south of the river,” *ke-lam* (溪南), are used in a larger geographical context, like that of the former Tainan County, in the domain of economics, urban planning and electoral politics for example. The northern area is more agricultural, focused around core historic centers, for most of them rooted in ancient Siraya nucleus, like Soelanh (Chiali

佳里) and Mattauw (Madou 麻豆). The southern area is more urban, more populated, including satellite towns easily connected to Tainan, the fifth largest cities in Taiwan. With the creation at the end of 2010 of a greater Tainan municipality formed by the administrative merge of Tainan County and Tainan City, we still need to observe how these expressions will evolve and how previous spatial perceptions will negotiate with a new situation.

From Koah-hiuⁿ Procession to Saikang's Ritual Territory

Any society stamps its mark on the space surrounding it and, in return, this constructed space appears as its expression and a scene open to the manifestation of local culture. Territory is not naturally given, it is the result of a system of representation and of authority applied over a space. The local society of the region of Saikang has chosen a very particular and conspicuous way to imprint its space and build its territory. It does so through the regular performance of a collective ritual: a territorial procession. That is a procession, locally called *Koah-hiuⁿ*, executed by its residents, that circumscribes the territory's borders, that defines an interior and excludes an exterior; a procession that goes through definite steps, bonds together communities living within the same region, and regulates their relations of power; a procession that allows the articulation of the communities with the space; an itinerary that reveals the supernatural map of the region, and becomes a meeting arena for the locals, their protective gods and their imagined wandering enemies.

The procession is the type of ritual most obviously related to space because during its process, ritual actors have to move and act physically over the territory. It is more than any other rite, ceremony or complex ritual able to make manifest in a dynamic way the social and symbolic organization of an entire region and also to mobilize and display all the traditional cultural aspects of a locality, refined along centuries.

The *Koah-hiuⁿ* type of procession delimits a territory and makes circumvolutions departing from a center, and in so doing distinguishes itself from another type of event, very close from the point of view of its external appearance: the pilgrimage procession. The pilgrimage procession is linear, in the sense that it executes a round trip back and forth to the departure point; it delimits no large-scale spatial boundaries with a center, nor inner constructed space; it considers the steps on the itinerary as temporary stations only (F. Allio, 2003, 2014).

There is a striking structural similarity between the composition of the train of the *Koah-hiu*ⁿ procession, the different steps of its route and the “constructed” territory therein demarcated: the segments of the procession are the formations coming from the local social units —localized cult communities— visited during the process. In other words, the itinerary of the procession consists in visiting the temples and the villages of the units present in the cortege, that is to say in going to all the communities sending a formation into the procession.

These communities are contiguously situated on the territory and their common space is defined, manifested and constructed by the procession. This territory does have a generic and traditional name: *hiu*ⁿ-*keng* (香境), meaning literally “incense territory,” in the sense of “supra-local ritual territory”;⁽⁶⁾ its limits, as well as its inner divisions, do not have any official resonance. The ritual territory includes, apart from the entire administrative borough of Saikang, portions of bordering boroughs: Chigu (七股) to the west, Annan (安南) to the southwest, Anding to the south, Chiali to the north. No portion of the borough of Madou, to the east, is included. For their daily life’s needs and purchases, the inhabitants of the ritual territory do not head necessarily towards Saikang but to the closest town offering identical or even more services, for distance reasons, or formerly inconvenient roads, but also out of habits and opportunities.

The procession operates the physical linkage at a symbolic level, but also at a socio-religious level, of all the territorial entities living over the same space. Otherwise those villages would be just neighbors, organized internally but separately from one another, with their own temple celebrations. Here they form a supra-local institution, a socio-religious alliance based on a principle of equality, and they are motivated by the accomplishment of the same large-scale ritual hosting the Kings of Epidemics, during which they open their temples to all other participating communities. The procession delineates an inner space, an inside opposed to an extra-territorial outside. This is reinforced by the fact that the surrounding areas (the “outside”) celebrate also their *Koah-hiu*ⁿ; likewise, their processions delimit their own ritual borders and manifest their own supra-local territory, sometimes slightly overlapping with other ritual areas. This territory has to be protected from human and supernatural aggressions, a belief

(6) Incense is both the palpable object used for the worship of deities and the abstract concept designating the worship itself, as well as a ritualistic regime as in the case of the Saikang supra-local celebration, or ritual action in general.

highlighted by the role of the numerous martial troupes found in *Koah-hiu*ⁿ processions like that of Saikang.

A String that Ties, a Loop that Encircles, a Thread that Recalls

The route of the procession is called *hiu*ⁿ-*lo* (香路), literally “incense road”, in the sense of “ritual route”; it includes the different “steps of the itinerary,” *lo*-*kuan* (路關), which are the temples at the heart of villages or other specific spots, but includes also all the space in-between, natural and supernatural, that the procession is also meant to influence (F. Allio: 2014). The participating communities perceive two dimensions in the *hiu*ⁿ-*lo*: the overall route, that is like a *spatiotemporal chart* each unit has to endorse and implement, consensual and explicit, that comprises sometimes specific spots, revealing rather implicitly memorial landmarks and the supernatural traces of gods’ presence and acts, as well as a more suggestive route, bringing to light local belongings and marking preferential relationships among communities.

The train of the procession is introduced by a symbolic object charged with religious meaning called “itinerary board,” *lo*-*kuan*-*pai* (路關牌) indicating each step of the chart. A new board is prepared every day for the section of the territory the procession is going to travel. It is written by hand, usually on a red piece of paper, and can be solemnly hold by hand and paraded by foot. In Saikang it is written on a yellow base and simply hung on a small truck “opening the road.” Apart from directions and orientations, the *lo*-*kuan*-*pai* indicates each step on the route, considered as a spatial reference, but also as a pass, *kuan* (關), to be crossed and overcome, with an action potentially risky due to the presence of malevolent entities that are supposed to haunt the place. In this regard, this representation shares some similarities with the rites for passing the *kuan* accomplished by individuals who want to better their existential condition and health or “change fate.” The human body is then regarded as a circumscribed space where applies the ritual therapy. Comparatively, the ritual territory could be compared to a physical body, and the procession to the ritual way to fix the wellbeing and vigor of the territory.

The overall performance of the processional ritual indicates the general limits of the supra-local religious territory, *hiu*ⁿ-*keng*. In practice, the performance takes several days and the itinerary covers one segment of the territory at a time. In other words, space is divided by time and time is constrained by space, meaning that the ritual

operates a clear differentiation within the *hiu*ⁿ-*keng* and that these divisions are translated into days. A processional time-space slot (minutes/kilometers) represents the necessary time to cover the distance between two steps and each day corresponds to the space occupied by one portion of the total number of participating communities (See appendix 3). Since each territorial unit needs to be visited and is inversely required to visit its counterparts, with respect to the reciprocal egalitarian exchange principle in use, in the end, three days and a half are necessary to cover the entire area. With the participation and the visit of 90-odd cult communities, the current processional ritual has reached an inner limit in terms of space and time. Its space-time is full and it is almost impossible to add more participants. Adding more participants would mean adding more visits and time of circulation, but less and less time separates the end and the beginning of the procession between two consecutive days, from only a few hours to no time at all.

A good combination of time and space is the major challenge that the *zong duzhen* (總督陣), in charge of the effective unfolding of the procession, has to face. This is also why each time-space slot is written down in a chart included in the booklet that each participating formation is required to respect. When reaching a temple, each formation goes to the local “check-point” and presents a special booklet that is stamped to prove the visit. I have witnessed a lot of managerial efforts made in the past twenty-five years to prevent a space/time discrepancy. Delays, omissions, or geographical deviations are the subjects of endless reproaches and are for sure represented as an imperfect management. To forget or avoid a visit along the route would spark disputes and endless reproaches among individual communities as well.

The division in days of the territory is of extreme importance, since it also structures the mental map of the locals and supports several types of differentiation within the region. Lasting relationships and exchanges among communities have been based upon this framework —such as food exchange to feed the participants—, and consequently among families or individuals. Several interrelations outside the ritual period also rely on this pattern. On this basis, I am tempted to argue that *differentiation* and *segmentation* constitute other categories of this territorial construction, adding a supplementary layer to the perception of the ritual space seen at the same time as a *totality*.

The cortege departs every day from the central temple where is situated the

temporary residence of the Kings of Epidemics, the itinerant inspectors of the territory. The Kings are embodied in “tablets of authority,” *ong-leng* (王令), placed inside a “royal palanquin,” *ong-kio* (王轎), and march along with all the participating formations (palanquins and troupes), at the rear. All the formations have to primarily converge towards the focal point of the King’s temporary residence before departing for their daily journey. From this center the cortege takes one main direction a day, stops at each step, possibly on schedule, and at night reaches back the royal residence again. At the end of the ritual, the four roads leading to the center and representing cardinal directions—west, north, south, east—, will have been taken (F. Allio, 1996). This construction is hardly surprising at a theoretical level, given the importance in the Chinese cultural system of the organization of space according to the five directions and their correspondences with other elements. What is particularly spectacular here are the mean and the scale of this scheme display. This movement and its constant orientation project the territory to another level of representation, in relation with the cosmos. This leads me to believe, as I have explained in my dissertation on Saikang’s triennial celebration that, at the level of representations, the procession, while constructing a tangible symbolic space, is building a microcosm, delimited and oriented naturally, culturally and supernaturally, on which all the actions undertaken by the humans and their gods—acts of exorcism, pacification and blessings— are meant to be influential and efficient. It is in this microcosm, constructed during the ritual period that the primal time, the time of origins, is embodied by the mixed sensorial effects of the ritual, and then differentiated by the very structure of the procession itself. In conclusion, with this ritual, local society is meant to be not only socially reproduced, but also symbolically regenerated (F. Allio, 1996).

The duration of the procession and the lines it traces on the territory stage a dynamic and living fresco of local society, collective memories and history. The procession is the string that ties the salient points of the territory together. It is also the thread that takes local society back in time, while stretching step by step the pace of the present, constrained by the scale of space.

Saikang’s Religious Time and Space Facing Ultra Modernity

The symbolic time and space constructed by the ritual in the region of Saikang continue to evolve in modern time, in the sense that new perceptions are added to the

original traditional pattern and to the set of accumulated experiences and memories forming the mytho-history and the mental map of local society. In closing this paper I would like to mention two such processes already underway, and that I will continue to analyze in further studies and developments: those brought about by cultural policies and high-end technology.

A heritage-making process has begun to impact the vision Saikang's participants and inhabitants have of their own festival, which tradition has been inherited from their ancestors, transmitted along many generations. A new approach of the past and traditions and of the land sheltering them is beginning to be drawn up externally and internally. In 2009, Taiwan's Council for Cultural Affairs⁽⁷⁾ recognized Saikang *Koah-hiu*ⁿ as a "national important custom" *guoding zhongyao minsu* (國定重要民俗), according to criteria set by the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act, *Wenhua zichan baocun fa* (文化資產保存法), 2005 —implying that it corresponded to the category of intangible heritage. By this decision Saikang *Koah-hiu*ⁿ became a cultural element to be praised and preserved by all Taiwanese. Saikang *Koah-hiu*ⁿ was the second such element to be distinguished ever in Taiwan; other festivals followed thereafter, sparking comparisons among localities and among counties and cities. In 2012, a year of numerous large-scale ritual occurrences in the Tainan area, the Bureau of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture as well as the local Bureau of Culture, launched various evaluations conducted by invited specialists during the performance of several rituals to be possibly picked and chosen in order to expand the list. The assessed or selected events presented a common feature: that of being localized. This is no surprise considering that temple festivals, communal rituals and processions in most parts of Han Taiwan tend to be the emblematic cultural symbols of a place. Local societies have always been traditionally attached to and involved in those events without getting any support or back up from the state. They are fully or partly defined and identified by them; their local material and immaterial culture is widely displayed in them. Therefore this heritagization process was a public recognition but not an incentive per se.

The leading role in the 2009 process had been played by the dynamic Culture Bureau of Tainan County, quite happy to have in its circumscription a cultural element of this nature, with a lot of potential in terms of heritagization at the national and

(7) The Council for Cultural Affairs became the Ministry of Culture in May 2012.

international scenes. In the beginning, the possibility of applying for the status of cultural heritage was viewed by Kheng-an-kiong and Saikang as a pragmatic means to obtain a financial aid from one of the state agencies supporting Taiwan's traditional events, in order to help local self-trained processional troupes, and not necessarily as a means to draw attention or even promote something called "heritage" in the larger society. Other attempts had been made in the past and minor grants had been allotted by the Ministry of the Interior previously in charge of folk heritage affairs. Eventually, Saikang's social actors learned about the wider meaning of their traditions and their valuable status. This was far from being the case when I started my fieldwork and people then did not understand the reason why I could come from a remote country to pay attention to what they called "low-level" culture, a reaction quite puzzling and upsetting.

The inscription on the list in 2009, considered as a major event, had been generously covered by the media. Three years later, this recognition was well known among all the inhabitants and had already become an object of pride and self-esteem. As a result new normative experience of traditions, as well as specific ways of promoting and preserving them, are now emerging in Saikang. This could reinforce objectively the importance of transmission and intergenerational interactions, even if the methods to reach these goals are not always ideal and not always efficient. At least, the subject is sparking passionate debates among the participants. The heritage-making process could also, quite predictably, as this had happened in other places, instill a new representation of the past, a new perception of the time flow and the limits of symbolic space. This could also condition the memorizing process of present events, and the vision of actual cultural routes.

The future will tell us which new form of collective memory and identity construction will emerge from the participation of Saikang in Taiwan's heritage-making process. Heritage policy is thriving all over Taiwan and the world while the cultural elements to be preserved are in jeopardy. Being neither a party to the concert of nations nor a United Nations member, Taiwan could have become outpaced in heritagization concepts, endeavors, and comparison of experiences. But, the opposite is taking place. Its interest in the contemporary global heritage-scape seems to be even more acute than elsewhere, also more sensitive due to its diplomatic status. Culture has always played a crucial role in Taiwan's soft diplomacy. The fact that Taiwan responds to a worldly

impulse and adopts most of the models produced by the UNESCO's World Heritage Programs locates Saikang, in spite of itself, at the intersection of local, national and global cultural discourses and stakes.

A second phenomenon equally interesting to observe deals with the role played by the Geographic Informative Science (GIS) system to produce, through real time data collection, with means of ultra modern technology using satellite connections, new maps of processional itineraries and new virtual geographical paradigms, a material that starts to be directly applied by temples.

GIS is a system designed to capture, store, analyze and reformulate all types of geographical data. In our case, the endeavor constitutes a rich contribution to the study of local environments and of the social space revealed by territorial rituals. This is exemplified by a comparative research on seven cases of processions in the Tainan region that was conducted during the spring of 2012 through the collaboration of the Geographic Informative Sciences Research Center, Research Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, Academia Sinica and myself, from the French National Center for Scientific Research (Fan I-chun, F. Allio, 2014).

Furthermore, this technological approach has had some effects on the actors of the ritual themselves: after harsh debates on possible negative consequences, GIS' and Kheng-an-kiong's websites provided in real time to the public the location of the Royal Palanquin. The position of the Centipede however, for fear of attracting too many spectators, had remained confidential since this carriage is quite difficult to handle, especially when too many unconcerned people surround it and are on its way. Another consequence is that the maps used in the *Koah-hiu*" handbook showing the procession's daily routes are now redrawn directly after this satellite imagery and GIS' documents (for comparison between old maps and new ones see appendices 4, 5, 6 & 7). One can expect to soon have to scrutinize the new perception of locality inferred by this kind of technology, this type of data collection and its translation on satellite imagery. What is also happening is that mental maps and religious itineraries unfolding during events that are ephemeral, such as festivals, can now be projected on the planet earth in the bi-dimensional form of scientific and permanent outlines. All this may generate a new world vision for the locals, at the very intersection of tradition and modernity.

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Appendices

Figure 1: Saikang's 2012 festival (*renchen ke* (壬辰科)): timetable of the activities.

| | | 西港勅玉慶安宮壬辰香科活動日期一覽表 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 國曆 | 農曆 | 星期 | 行 | 事 | 說 | 明 | | | | | | | |
| 5. 9. | 4. 19. | 三 | 謝燈篙(本宮及所有燈篙) | | 上午十點(巳)高尾倒向南兼東兩方 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 7. | 4. 17. | 一 | 恭送保生大帝 鹿耳門媽祖 | | 下午五角頭普渡 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 7. | 4. 17. | 一 | 送王 | | 王船上午八點起駕 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 6. | 4. 16. | 日 | 繞境第三日香 | | 王橋早上六點起駕 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 5. | 4. 15. | 六 | 繞境第二日香 | | 王橋早上六點起駕 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 4. | 4. 14. | 五 | 繞境第一日香 | | 王橋早上六點起駕 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 3. | 4. 13. | 四 | 請媽祖(往媽祖宮鹿耳門天后宮恭請開基媽祖) | | 王橋早上五點起駕 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 3. | 4. 13. | 四 | 火醮(即四月十三日清晨一時)起鼓 | | 四月十三日下午三時送火王 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. 2. | 4. 12. | 三 | 架棚(請王)下午七點至九點 開光點眼 | | 請王(王船地)晚六時起駕 | | | | | | | | |
| 4. 26. | 4. 6. | 四 | 醮壇起鼓 | | 十點(巳時)起鼓 | | | | | | | | |
| 4. 23. | 4. 3. | 一 | 燈篙(東西宅) | | 十一點十五分(午時)高尾宜從北坎方 陞起 | | | | | | | | |
| 4. 21. | 4. 1. | 六 | 王船進水、出澳 | | 十點(巳時) | | | | | | | | |
| 4. 18. | 3. 28. | 三 | 王船豎桅帆 | | 十點(巳時) | | | | | | | | |
| 4. 18. | 3. 28. | 三 | 豎燈篙(南北宅) | | 十點(巳時)高尾宜從西兌方陞起 | | | | | | | | |
| 4. 15. | 3. 25. | 日 | 千歲爺南巡 | | 一、六點五分出發往佳里牛港宮恭請保生大帝 二、繞境主往府城臨臨臨臨 三、台南市友誼廟宇繞境進香 | | | | | | | | |
| 3. 11. | 2. 19. | 日 | 進衙門 | | 六點(卯時)西南方起手 | | | | | | | | |
| 3. 4. | 2. 12. | 日 | 豎旗杆 燈篙(慶安宮) | | 六點(卯時)南離方陞起 | | | | | | | | |

附註：一、壬辰香科各項鑿醮捐獻標準。
 1. 王令、鯉魚鑿醮每尊貳仟元。
 2. 神像鑿醮(包括大令、玉旨、帶座王令寶器等)每尊參仟元。
 二、壬辰香科新乞金鯉魚、浮鱸王令每尊伍仟元。
 三、王令、鯉魚舊換新每尊參仟陸佰元。

(Source: Keng-an-kiang)

Figure 2: Main dates of the history of the Saikang festival until 2012.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 36 | 35 | 34 | 33 | 32 | 31 | 30 | 29 | 28 | 27 | 26 | 25 | 24 | 23 | 22 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 18 | |
| 一八八六 | 一八八三 | 一八八〇 | 一八七七 | 一八七四 | 一八七一 | 一八六八 | 一八六五 | 一八六二 | 一八五九 | 一八五六 | 一八五三 | 一八五〇 | 一八四七 | 一八四四 | 一八四一 | 一八三八 | 一八三五 | | |
| 丙戌科 | 癸未科 | 庚辰科 | 丁丑科 | 甲戌科 | 辛未科 | 戊辰科 | 乙丑科 | 壬戌科 | 己未科 | 丙辰科 | 癸丑科 | 庚戌科 | 丁未科 | 甲辰科 | 辛丑科 | 戊戌科 | 乙未科 | | |
| 光緒十二年 | 光緒九年 | 光緒六年 | 光緒三年 | 同治十年 | 同治七年 | 同治四年 | 同治一年 | 同治八年 | 咸豐六年 | 咸豐三年 | 咸豐〇年 | 道光三年 | 道光〇年 | 道光二七年 | 道光二四年 | 道光一八年 | 道光一五年 | | |
| " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | |
| 大王余千歲 | 大王封千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王封千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王封千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王封千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王封千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王封千歲 | |
| 三五王孫千歲 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------------|
| 17 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 科次 | 西港五慶安宮歷屆香科沿革 |
| 一八三二 | 一八二九 | 一八二六 | 一八二三 | 一八二〇 | 一八一七 | 一八一四 | 一八一〇 | 一八〇七 | 一八〇四 | 一八〇一 | 一七九八 | 一七九五 | 一七九二 | 一七八九 | 一七八六 | 一七八三 | 公元年 | |
| 壬辰科 | 己丑科 | 丙戌科 | 癸未科 | 庚辰科 | 丁丑科 | 甲戌科 | 辛未科 | 戊辰科 | 乙丑科 | 壬戌科 | 己未科 | 丙辰科 | 癸丑科 | 庚戌科 | 丁未科 | 甲辰科 | 香科次 | |
| 道光十二年 | 道光九年 | 道光六年 | 道光三年 | 道光〇年 | 道光二七年 | 道光二四年 | 道光二一年 | 道光一八年 | 道光一五年 | 道光一二年 | 道光九年 | 道光六年 | 道光三年 | 道光〇年 | 咸豐五年 | 咸豐二年 | 中國年號 | |
| 康熙五十一年改建小型廟宇並署名慶安宮 | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | 備 | |
| 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 | 註 | |
| 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 三五王孫千歲 | 王 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 73 | 72 | 71 | 70 | 69 | 68 | 67 | 66 | 65 | 64 | 63 | 62 | 61 | 60 | 59 | 58 | 57 | 56 |
| 二〇〇〇 | 一九九七 | 一九九四 | 一九九一 | 一九八八 | 一九八五 | 一九八二 | 一九七九 | 一九七六 | 一九七三 | 一九七〇 | 一九六七 | 一九六四 | 一九六一 | 一九五八 | 一九五五 | 一九五二 | 一九四九 |
| 庚辰科 | 丁丑科 | 甲戌科 | 辛未科 | 戊辰科 | 乙丑科 | 壬戌科 | 己未科 | 丙辰科 | 癸丑科 | 庚戌科 | 丁未科 | 甲辰科 | 辛丑科 | 戊戌科 | 乙未科 | 壬辰科 | 己丑科 |
| 民國八九年 | 民國八六年 | 民國八三年 | 民國八〇年 | 民國七七年 | 民國七四年 | 民國七一年 | 民國六八年 | 民國六五年 | 民國六二年 | 民國五九年 | 民國五六年 | 民國五三年 | 民國五〇年 | 民國四七年 | 民國四四年 | 民國四一年 | 民國三八年 |
| " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " |
| 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 |
| 三五王孫千歲 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 55 | 54 | 53 | 52 | 51 | 50 | 49 | 48 | 47 | 46 | 45 | 44 | 43 | 42 | 41 | 40 | 39 | 38 | 37 |
| 一九四三 | 一九四〇 | 一九三七 | 一九三四 | 一九三一 | 一九二八 | 一九二五 | 一九二二 | 一九一九 | 一九一六 | 一九一三 | 一九一〇 | 一九〇七 | 一九〇四 | 一九〇一 | 一八九八 | 一八九五 | 一八九二 | 一八九〇 |
| 丙戌科 | 癸未科 | 庚辰科 | 丁丑科 | 甲戌科 | 辛未科 | 戊辰科 | 乙丑科 | 壬戌科 | 己未科 | 丙辰科 | 癸丑科 | 庚戌科 | 丁未科 | 甲辰科 | 辛丑科 | 壬辰科 | 乙未科 | 壬辰科 |
| 民國三二年 | 民國三〇年 | 民國二七年 | 民國二四年 | 民國二一年 | 民國一八年 | 民國一五年 | 民國一二年 | 民國九年 | 民國六年 | 民國三年 | 宣統二年 | 光緒三二年 | 光緒三〇年 | 光緒二七年 | 光緒二四年 | 光緒二一年 | 光緒一八年 | 光緒一五年 |
| " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " |
| 大王吳千歲 | 大王余千歲 | 大王吳千歲 |
| 三五王孫千歲 |

Figure 3: Example of a *Koah-hiu*ⁿ daily schedule: the 2012 procession's last day



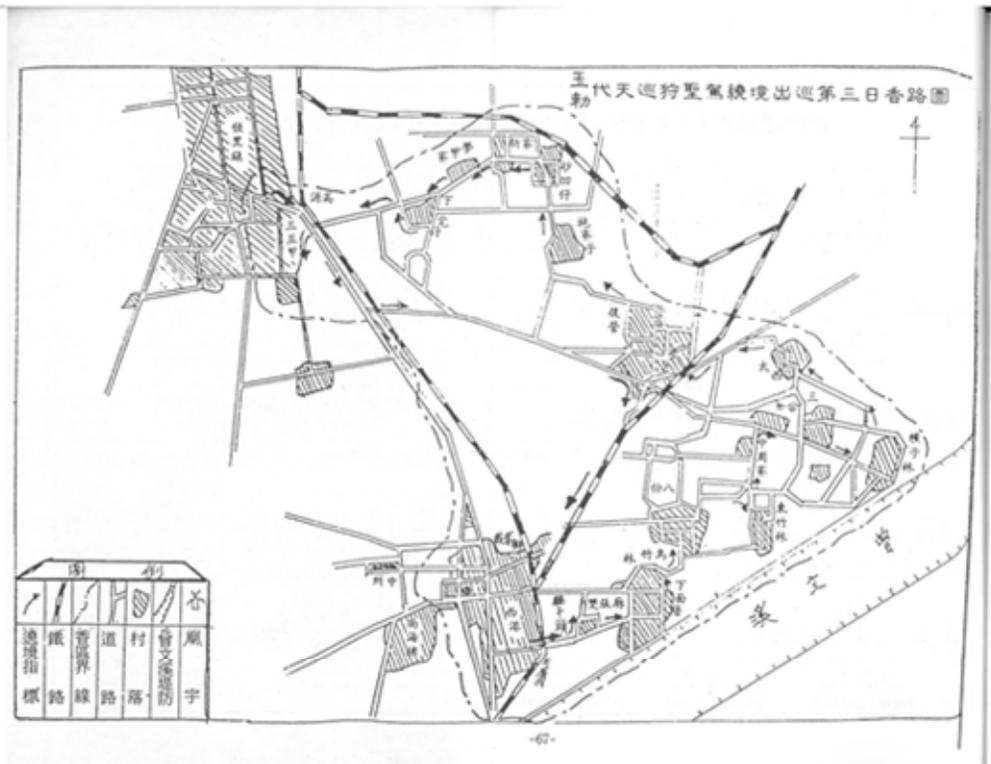
(Source: Keng-an-kiang)

Figure 4: Example of a *Koah-hiu*ⁿ daily itinerary drawn after GIS methods: the 2012 procession's last day



(Source: Keng-an-kiong, based on a GIS map (2009), GIS Center, Academia Sinica)

Figure 5: Prior to 2012, type of map and itinerary for the last day of procession



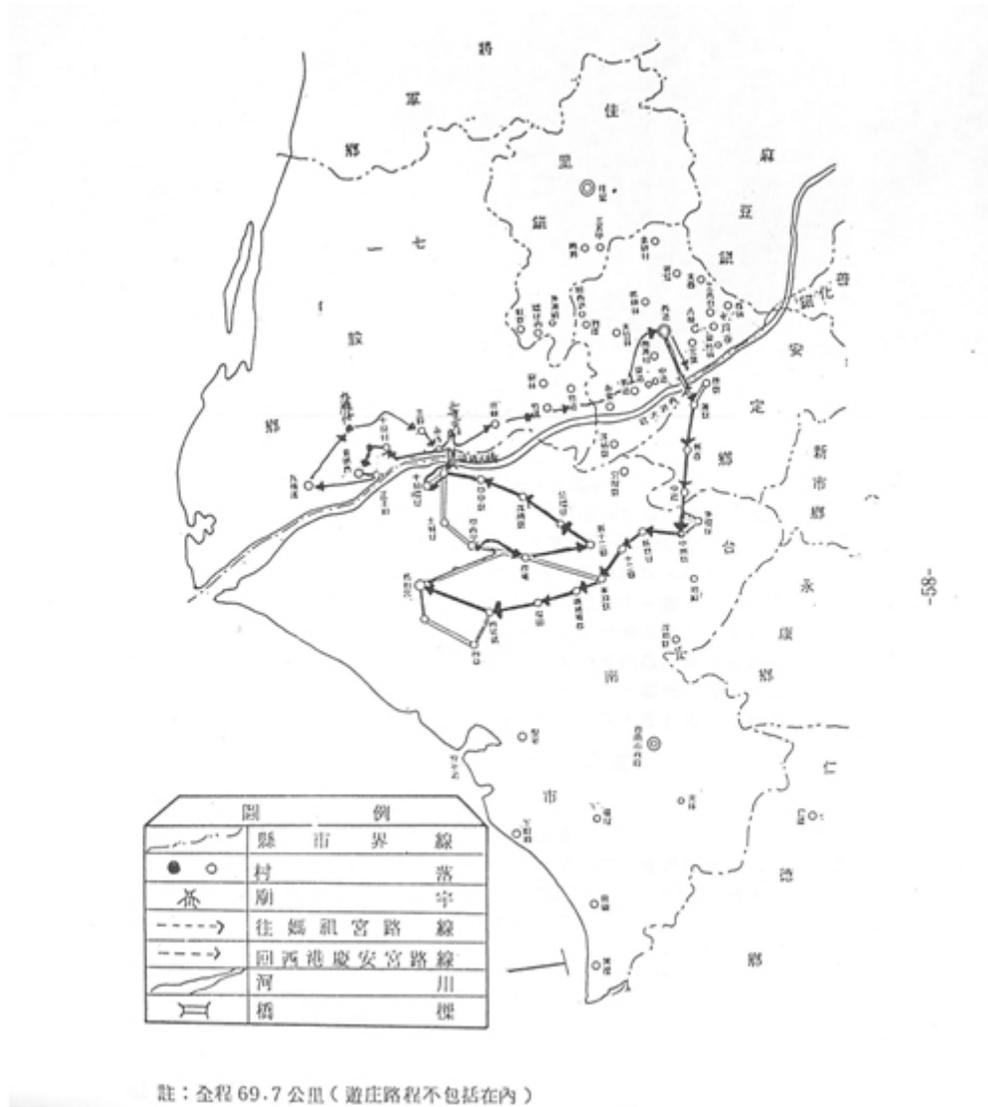
(Source: Keng-an-kiong)

Figure 6: Map and itinerary for the “Invitation of Matsu” (procession of the year 2012), mining on GIS data.



(Source: Keng-an-kiong, based on a GIS map (2009), GIS Center, Academia Sinica)

Figure 7: Prior to 2012, type of map and itinerary for the “Invitation of Matsu” procession.



(Source: Keng-an-kiang)

中文摘要

自 1784 年以來，西港刈香 (*Koah-hiu*ⁿ) 每三年舉行一次的跨村慶典儀式，儘管遭遇外在重大的挑戰與變化，卻從未中斷。在臺灣漢人傳統宗教發展中，這樣的特色已經展現出值得注意的時間深度。從日常生活延伸與人類原始流動性的角度來看，刈香儀式所涵蓋的區域相當龐大。其位在臺南內地，更是第一批大量來自中國的移民及外人與臺灣原住民第一次廣泛接觸的地方。西港的鄰近區域也舉辦稱為「刈香」的儀式，它們同樣劃定了儀式性的邊界也形成了一個特殊的區境。

西港慶典儀式的主祀神為千歲爺，也就是十二位瘟王的通稱，或稱為「代天巡狩」，三位一組每三年輪值巡視地方。在地方神明的陪同下，祂們在民眾的期盼中為地方進行驅邪、整頓與賜福的任務。慶典儀式的準備工作長達數月，在最後的六天達到頂點，不同的儀式由不同的人負責行使，同一時間在不同地方舉行，卻在某些時段互相連結。目前以慶安宮為中心，有九十個以上的社群參與，形成儀式共同區，傳統稱之「香境」。

施行這類儀式會安排硬體與象徵的體系，其中蘊含了一種時間與空間的內部交織，這也反映出臺灣宗教文化中對時間與空間的主要概念。本文主要討論刈香遶境儀式，以自 1988 年以來所搜集的田野資料以及 25 年間與當地人的交流為主軸來討論當地民眾在刈香遶境儀式中的時空體驗。

西港刈香特別適合從這種顯露性和結構性的時間與空間範疇，進行徹底分析。儀式的歷史與漢人開發及當地社會發展相符；儀式的時間架構與大社會所使用的時間計量與節奏不同；集體和儀式的記憶交錯於環境中的地理變遷，遶境直接連接物質環境，並且在官方的界線之外劃分出一個象徵性的境域。

在西港，每一個參與庄頭都是同樣重要的。他們的地點、方位、相對距離與歷史背景、祀奉的神明各不相同，但在遶境儀式神聖的時間和空間中，每個庄頭共存在同樣的地位，且相互連結，形成一體，面對同樣的命運。

西港地區刻劃出獨特且有趣的地理特徵：從十九世紀初期到二十世紀初期間其環境型態及水力結構產生了劇變。這造成了土地的占用、自然資源的開發、人類移居的過程、以及居民生活方式與傳統（例如遶境活動）的種種變化。但是，最緊要的，這些阻礙雖然對儀式的區域主體帶來了相當程度的挑戰，例如在儀式境域的子區間形成地理障礙，或是造成象徵性的地理中心改變等，卻沒有使刈香的持續性中斷。然而，仔細研究儀式可以發現集體記憶的形成、地方認同的形構與遶境儀式本身，都清楚地留下了這些挑戰與過程的痕跡。

今天，慶典儀式基本的呈現與進行給人一種好像從開始即是如此的印象。但是仔細觀察可以發現其排程與構成要素變得越來越複雜，以及在原始的活動上增加了一些儀式。同樣的，從過去到現在儀式的範圍也不斷擴張。遶境由兩百多年前十三村落開始(其地理核心為懿德宮，(也就是今天的姑媽宮))，之後新的村落逐漸加入，形成新的必須參拜的伙伴。

儀式遵循一種特別時間的再現，廣義地說，形塑於文化之中，尤其是宗教。撇去由於生活方式改變所造成的細部調整不說，定期與週而復始很明顯地是此儀式本質性與既定性的時間特質，與事件驅動或線性模式不同。

在西港與其他地方一樣，儀式要依照一個特別的時間體系而舉行，以農曆及週期計量來規範。倘若由 1784 年發現王船的時間用來解釋儀式的源起，但是經過一系列地方人民的決策，後來慶典變定期而週期的。本文試圖闡述此儀式以三年為一期的節奏。瘟王的數目、祂們與十二年中每個單位之序列關係、輪值、以三位為一組的來臨等作為指標進行闡述。

慶典儀式的定期性與節奏至少論證了一點：不論在象徵的或是邏輯性延伸的社會層面，它都必須一再被重複。此外，如同其他社會定期而舉行的所費不貲之大型慶典，其舉行的頻率通常和負責的寺廟與家族重新開始籌措必須資財的時間相符，然後，這個資財不矛盾地又會在這種類似印第安冬季贈禮節(potlatch-like)的慶典中散發殆盡。我們可以很輕易得看到，這種慶典儀式與它固定的節奏對西港人一輩子的生活有極大的影響。

西港地區的當地社會選擇了非常特別且顯著的方式來印跡其空間以及建立其境域，這個方式就是定期舉行集體儀式，藉遶境活動來連結同區的社群，劃分出邊界，定內除外。遶境的路線展現一幅超自然地方地圖，並使區域的社群跟空間聯結。遶境活動也成為當地人、保護神以及想像的「好兄弟」接觸與交流的場景。

因為須要遶到每個境域單位，倒過來說每個單位，又基於互相交換的原則，又必須拜訪其他相對應的社群，因此需要三天半來涵蓋整個區域。換句話說，空間被時間所切割，而時間又被空間所限制：儀式將香境的內部清楚地區分出來，而這些分支又被轉換成以天為單位的時間。

於原始傳統的模式上以及於累積的經驗與記憶上(一起形成了地方社會的神話歷史與心智地圖)，因包括了新的考量，西港地區的儀式所建構出來的象徵性時間與空間，在當代仍繼續地演化。本文的結語討論這種演化的兩個案例：文化政策帶來的演化與高科技帶來的演化。

西港刈香的參與庄頭及居民對刈香儀式的觀點逐漸受到文化資產創造過程所影響。2009 年臺灣文化建設委員會指定西港刈香為國定重要民俗。面對世界潮流

與聯合國教科文組織世界遺產計畫的規範，臺灣對此做出了回應，也因此使得西港成為地方、國家與全球文化論述與關注的交會點。

第二個同樣有趣值得觀察的現象，則是使用地理資訊科技系統（GIS，**Geographic Information Science**）來蒐集即時的地理資訊數據（使用與衛星連結的超現代科技），產製出新的遶境/進香路線與新的虛擬地理範式。這些資料都已經開始被寺廟採用。

或許在不久的將來，因為這種數據收集與布局而產生對地方的新理解，將作為必須進一步分析的依據。在這同時，慶典活動所展開的心智地圖與宗教路線，原本是稍縱即逝的，現在卻得以被投影在地球上且留下科學與永久的二維影像輪廓。這些都有可能在當地人對傳統與現代性的認知之間產生一種新的世界觀。

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