

## Changing Role of *Pi*, a Bamboo Sound-producing Tool, in the *Bon Chot* ritual of the Lua-mal in Nan Province, Northern Thailand

Yuji Baba

Faculty of Social Relations, Kyoto Bunkyo University, Kyoto 611-0041, Japan

Corresponding author. E-mail: y-baba@po.kbu.ac.jp

### ABSTRACT

**T**he people called Lua-mal, living in the mountains of Nan Province, Northern Thailand, hold the *Bon Chot* ritual every August to entertain and strengthen the soul of rice grown in a dry field. During the ritual period, the soul of the rice is invited from the dry field, while villagers march in the village, beating *Pi*, a bamboo sound-producing tool, to entertain the soul of rice in expectation of a good harvest. The *Pi* can be beaten only during the ritual period and only within a village. *Pi* is a sound-producing tool for religious purposes, rather than a musical instrument used in an ordinary music performance; it is connected to the villagers' life in nature. However, the role of *Pi* may change in the future, becoming a musical instrument for enjoyment, as the sociocultural economy of the Lua-mal changes. In recent years, with the demand for biofuel, corn has increasingly become a commercial, rather than subsistence crop for the Lua-mal. If rice production declines, the role of *Pi* to entertain the soul of rice may be lost, and *Pi* may exist only as a musical instrument for an audience, and no longer limited to the specific ritual period or inside the village. It may even be used to attract and entertain tourists.

**Keywords:** Lua-mal people, Bamboo sound-producing tool, Soul of rice, *Bon Chot* ritual