

**Transforming Tradition in Eastern Taiwan:  
Bunun Incorporation of Christianity in their  
Spirit Relationships**

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## **Declaration**

Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is the result of original work carried out by the author.

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# Abstract

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This thesis investigates the history of religious beliefs and practices among the Bunun people of eastern Taiwan after their acceptance of Christianity at the end of the Second World War. I describe the process of Christianisation among the Bunun people, especially those who live in Hualien County, and investigate the role of Christianity in the development of Bunun identity in post-war and post-colonial Taiwan. Instead of seeing Christianity as a ‘missionary imposition’, I follow the ways the Bunun have actively adopted, interpreted, and modified both the indigenous and Christian forms and ideas to meet their needs in different periods. I argue, therefore, that the study of the interactions of Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs and practices should examine what makes some Christian ideas and forms more amenable to adoption than others, and what the determinant ones are.

The thesis demonstrates that Bunun conversion to Christianity has been a complex process involving both continuity and discontinuity. Continuity and change take place at the same time and are interwoven. To gain a better understanding of the mutual constitution of Christianity and Bunun culture, I suggest that we approach this question by combining the exegetical and historical perspectives. The intertwined trajectories of evangelisation, Sinicisation, indigenisation, and urbanisation have deeply influenced the articulation between Christian beliefs and practices and indigenous ones. My argument is that the reason most Bunun people desire to maintain continuity with their pre-Christian ways, and the reason the minority refuse to do so, derives not only from the appeals of Christianity but also from their engagements with the ethnic, political, and cultural politics of Taiwan that they have experienced from the end of the Second World War to the present. The study of indigenisation is not only to see what has changed or been preserved, an ongoing interest among scholars, but also to focus on the articulation of Christian and indigenous cultural elements at any given time within the wider social and political environment in which the Bunun are placed.

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# Introduction

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On 3 December, 2010, in the Yuli Township of Hualien County<sup>1</sup>, the Bunun Presbyterians celebrated the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their initial missionisation. Organisers were surprised to see that nearly one thousand enthusiastic Bunun Presbyterians showed up from all over the island, even though there was a government-sponsored National Bunun Athletic Games being held on the same day in another place. This shows, the committee members asserted, that the Lord is much more important than the state to the Bunun people. Indeed, the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their initial missionisation was a significant event for the Bunun people. In 2006, four years before this, the Mayuan Presbyterian Church in eastern Taiwan proposed preparations for the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony. This proposition was accepted unanimously by the Committee of Bunun Presbytery that same year. In 2007, a joint meeting was held among three Bunun Presbyteries<sup>2</sup>, in which, in addition to the big anniversary, a series of memorial activities was also planned. During the anniversary celebration, participants waved their hands, sang hymns, and earnestly prayed to God. They believed they had been selected by God as the starting point of God's salvation plan for the whole Bunun people.

Like most anniversaries, the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary was intended to serve as a retrospective of the Bunun's glorious mission achievements: the rapid acceptance and spread of Christianity after the Second World War. The Bunun are an Austronesian-speaking people of Taiwan. Today, approximately 56,000 Bunun live in

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<sup>1</sup> Yuli Township is an urban township, located in the southern part of Hualien County, eastern Taiwan. For the Bunun Presbyterians, Yuli is a significant place in their mission history, as the first Bunun Bible Training Session was held there, and this event is perceived as an important breakthrough of Christian evangelisation among the Bunun (Chapter 2).

<sup>2</sup> The Bunun Presbyterians belong to three Bunun Presbyteries: the Bunun Presbytery, the Central Bunun Presbytery, and the Southern Bunun Presbytery.

central, eastern and southeastern Taiwan (Council of Indigenous Peoples, August 2015). The Bunun of eastern Taiwan were among the first of Taiwan's indigenous peoples to accept Christianity. Presbyterian missionaries first arrived in 1945, followed by Roman Catholic priests in 1955. These early missionaries were highly successful, to the extent that the vast majority of the Bunun population rapidly became Christians on a large scale between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. Pastor Wen-tsi Hu, an itinerant Han Taiwanese missionary, reported that in 1964 the Bunun Presbyterians numbered 11,630, which was more than 50 percent of the Bunun population at that time (1965:424). Many Bunun villagers also reported to me that the other half of the Bunun population had converted to Catholicism.

This past glory has been fading in recent years, as the number of Bunun Christians is declining. Take the number of Bunun Presbyterians for example. According to the church census, the percentage of Bunun Presbyterians dropped steadily from 35.3% to 26.5% between 2002 and 2011 (Table 1). At the end of 2011, only about a quarter of the Bunun population were still Presbyterians. This is a sharp decline compared to the 1964 census cited above. Clearly, with the steady growth of the Bunun population, the number of Bunun Presbyterians has not increased, but remained unchanged. This is also true of Bunun Catholics. Although I do not have the statistics at hand, according to Bunun Catholic believers' accounts, the number of Bunun Catholic believers is declining as well.

**Table 1 Percentage of Bunun Presbyterians among the total Bunun population**

Year	Number of Bunun Presbyterians*	Number of Bunun population**	Percentage
2002	14,012	39,699	35.3%
2003	14,082	42,213	33.4%
2004	14,808	46,397	31.9%
2005	14,115	45,831	30.8%
2006	14,293	47,585	30%
2007	13,632	48,974	27.8%
2008	14,012	50,132	28%
2009	14,268	51,447	27.7%
2010	14,365	52,585	27.3%
2011	14,200	53,516	26.5%

\* Source: Statistics of Church Trends of Presbyteries, PCT; [www.acts.pct.org.tw/stat/](http://www.acts.pct.org.tw/stat/)

\*\* Source: Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan, Taiwan; [www.apc.gov.tw](http://www.apc.gov.tw)

With the declining percentage of Bunun Christians posing a threat to the integrity of Bunun identity as a distinct ethnic group, the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary prompted the Bunun Presbyterians and church ministers to deal with this pressing issue. The need was elucidated in the anniversary invitation letter signed by the heads of three Bunun Presbyteries:

Looking back on the past sixty-five years, because God remembered us, the Bunun people, He sent foreign missionaries and preachers, or Christians of this country, to bring the gospel to us at different times in different ways. These pioneer evangelists established churches in every Bunun tribe, and today we have three Presbyteries, eighty churches, more than one hundred evangelists, and over fifteen thousand adherents.

To memorialise the history of God's salvation upon the Bunun churches, the three Presbyteries have decided to hold services, anniversary and sporting events...to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bunun's initial evangelisation.

1. We offer our thanksgiving to God as we have been transformed from 'Bunun' to 'Bunun for God' in terms of His mercy.
2. We commemorate the sacrifices and devotion of those missionaries and early evangelists dedicated to mission work, and salute and learn from them.
3. We have to encourage each other. Although the Bunun people are divided into three Presbyteries, under the ideas of Bunun for Christ and the world mission, [we must] collaborate actively and share experiences to accomplish our goals.

The third point, which was in fact the main goal of this anniversary, was represented in two Chinese slogans which proclaimed: 'Mission Mounting up as with Wings of Eagles' and 'Bunun as a Whole Submitting to the Lord'. These two slogans were printed on two oversized banners hanging from the ceiling on the right and left sides of the stage at the anniversary opening service. The two slogans were repeatedly read over the microphone from the stage in sermons and prayers by one or another speaker, even more frequently than any biblical passages.

As the main themes of this anniversary, the slogans were deliberately chosen by the organising committee in response to their status quo. Pastor Taupas Tanapima, the head of the Bunun Presbytery then, explained to me that the phrase 'Mission Mounting up as with Wings of Eagles' was taken, with minor modification, from Isaiah 40: 31. He continued to add that the keyword of this passage is the 'renewing strength' in relation to Bunun missionisation. He saw this anniversary as a significant milestone in Bunun mission history, when the Bunun should pray for God to confer upon them

power and renewed strength to accomplish the goal: Bunun for Christ. Consequently, the second slogan, Bunun as a Whole Submitting to the Lord, was raised. It should be noted in this statement that the Bunun Presbyterian clergy hope the entire Bunun people come to Christianity. Thus, Christianity is regarded as a crucial badge of ethnic identity and solidarity by the Bunun people.

What happened to the mission work in the past and in the present? How do we construe the role of Christianity in the historical context that is so important to the Bunun people? In this thesis, I describe the process of Christianisation among the Bunun people, especially those who live in Hualien County, and investigate the role of Christianity in the development of Bunun identity in post-war and post-colonial Taiwan. Instead of seeing Christianity as a 'missionary imposition' (Barker 1992:145), I follow the ways the Bunun have actively adopted, interpreted, and modified both the indigenous and Christian forms and ideas to meet their needs in different periods. I argue, therefore, that the study of the interactions of Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs and practices should examine what makes some Christian ideas and forms more amenable to adoption than others, and what the determinant ones are. John Barker shows the complicated interplay between Maisin indigenous beliefs and Christianity (1989, 1990, 1992, 1993), but my study expands upon that insight to show that the adaptation of Christianity is closely related to the Bunun's active attempts to construct various layers of identity at different times.

Concerned with the way people's identity and Christianity are mutually constitutive, I describe the complex interactions of Christianity and Bunun pre-Christian religious ideas and practices. I analyse how closely the Bunun's expectations of Christianity mirror the indigenous, pre-Christian view of their relationship with the Heavens, spirits of the ancestors, and the wild. At the same time, I

argue that, in the process of reconciliation, indigenous religious beliefs and practices have been reshuffled in terms of Christian ideas as well. These two perspectives meet together in the main topic of this thesis, which is concerned with how the Bunun's adoption of Christianity contributed to the formation of Bunun identities in terms of history, shared or personal experiences, politics, and morality.

The two foci that structure my writing deal first of all with the ways the Bunun people formulated identities through appropriating Christianity and, subsequently, the role of Christianity in shaping people's identities. By means of this twofold perspective, I aim to dissolve the already set distinction of the 'indigenous' and 'exogenous', focusing instead on the dynamics of this relationship in relation to notions of identity in historical processes. As van der Veer has asserted, '[c]onversion to a world religion is not conversion to transcendent religious essences, but to new self-understandings which only become possible as part of particular historical formations' (2010[1996]:611). I argue that the Bunun's understandings of Christianity and their pre-Christian ideas have periodically changed in accordance with the social contexts and identities. The study of the interactions of Christianity and Bunun religious beliefs and practices will lead us through their past, present, and future. It also illustrates how this 'world religion' constitutes the social and cultural lives of the Bunun people, and vice versa.

## **Research Topic**

Instead of seeing the process of Christianisation in dualistic narratives: Christianity versus indigenous religion, western versus non-western, missionaries versus natives (*cf.* Barker 1992:147), it is my contention that the interactions of Christianity and Bunun

traditional religious beliefs and practices need to be understood in terms of the specific historical and social conditions in which they engaged.

In fact, Taiwan indigenous peoples<sup>3</sup> have had very different experiences of Christianity. Christianity began to penetrate into Taiwan in the early seventeenth century. In 1627, five years after the Dutch occupation in southwest Taiwan, missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church were invited to attend to the needs of the Dutch officials and military personnel. The Spanish occupied northeast coast of Taiwan and established a commercial base in 1626. Missionaries of the Dominican Order of the Roman Catholic Church of the Philippine were requested to go on board. Both the Catholic and Protestant missionaries began to contact with the local plain indigenes who were the major population in Taiwan then. The mission work of Catholic missionaries ended when the Spaniards were expelled by the Dutch in 1642. By 1650, the Dutch reported that 5,900 persons has been baptised. However, the mission work of Protestant missionaries ended soon after the Chinese took control of the island in 1662.

The restoration of mission work occurred two hundred years after the departure of the Dutch and Spanish. This is closely related to the situation in China. In 1858, the Qing regime was forced to sign the treaty of Tianjin. This treaty guaranteed the free circulation of western missionaries throughout China. It also opened the four chief ports of Taiwan to western trade. The Dominican Order of the Roman Catholic Church first sent priests from the Manila, Philippine to southern Taiwan in 1859. In 1865, the England Presbyterian mission commenced to work in southern Taiwan. Subsequently,

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<sup>3</sup> There are sixteen officially recognised indigenous peoples in Taiwan with a total population of 541,987 in April of 2015 (Council of Indigenous Peoples). The indigenous population is about 2% of the total Taiwan population. They are Amis, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai, Puyuma, Saisiyat, Yami, Thao, Kavalan, Truku, Sakizaya, Sediq, Hla'alua and Kanakanavu, not including the plain indigenes who have been assimilated into the Han population.

a Canadian Presbyterian missionary, Dr. George Leslie Mackay, arrived at southern Taiwan in 1871. He came to Tanshui in the north Taiwan in March 1872 after realising that the regions of southern Taiwan were preoccupied by the England Presbyterian mission.

At that time, western missionaries played a central role in propagating the faith and establishing the institutional structure. The South Synod and the North Synod were established by England and Canadian Presbyterian mission respectively with the permission of their mother church. Synod was the premier decision-making institution which managed all of the churches within their constituent. Both of the institutions were dominated by western missionaries.

By 1929, some Han Taiwanese and the plain indigenes had been Christians for a half century (Shepherd 1996), whereas the indigenous peoples of the mountains and of the east coast were still new to the religion. Although the Presbyterian ministers showed an interest in evangelising the ‘mountain indigenous peoples’, mission work among indigenous communities was strictly prohibited during Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) as they thought Christianity might disturb the natives’ social lives and even trigger insurrection against colonists (Covell 1998:144-153; Huang 1996:426; Wu 1978:39). Missionaries were not allowed to preach the gospel in indigenous communities.

To circumvent this obstacle, Presbyterian missionaries found potential indigenous converts, trained them, and sent them back to their communities to conduct mission work. For example, on his first mission trip to eastern Taiwan in 1929, Rev. James I. Dickson, a Canadian Presbyterian missionary, successfully persuaded a middle-aged Truku woman, Ciwang Iwal, to attend the Women’s Bible School in Tamshui. Ciwang

Iwal returned home two years later and commenced her mission career in secret. She visited relatives and friends at night and brought Christian messages to them while evading the watchful eyes of the Japanese police. Christianity was thus disseminated through Ciwang Iwal's efforts, and the number of Truku Christians increased (Dickson 1965:366-367). The reasons for the Truku people's conversion have often been analysed in relation to Japanese persecution: the acceptance of Christianity helped the Truku people to resist Japanese rule (Vicedom 1967). Subsequently, Truku Christians began to preach the gospel secretly to neighbouring Bunun villages beginning in the early 1940s.

By briefly reviewing the early encounter of Christianity and Taiwan indigenous groups, two points need to be further elaborated. First, the indigenous evangelist, who played a significant role in introducing Christianity, was in fact the agent of religious change. This is not, of course, to say that foreign missionaries had no influence on indigenous culture or that the interactions between missionaries and indigenous converts were unimportant. The point I wish to make clear is that the study of Christianisation should move from 'models of missionisation' (Barker 1992) to a wider framework that includes different kinds of religious encounters. This viewpoint also rejects the opposition between indigenous religious beliefs and Christianity. Instead of seeing Christianity as a foreign intrusion by foreign agents who work to replace indigenous cultures, it is important to investigate how the indigenous people reinterpret Christianity to make it consistent with what they already know.

Second, since its introduction, Christianity in Taiwan was not, and still is not, the rulers' or the majority's religion, and has sometimes been at odds with the state. By comparing the processes of evangelisation in Taiwan and other places in the world, Shiun-wei Huang (2012) draws our attention to the complex relationships between

Christianity, politics and identity. He points out, for the people of Africa, the Americans, and Oceania, Christianity was introduced by their western rulers. Thus, Christianity was closely associated with western colonial forces, in politics, economics, the military, and education, and became a part of the 'white power'. However, Christianity in Taiwan developed in quite distinct contexts compared to other places in the world. In Taiwan, although Christianity was of western origin and was introduced by western missionaries, it has never been the ruling class' religion, as Taiwan was never governed by westerners (2012:67-68). In his paper on the Christianisation of Iwan Ami, Huang argues that 'conversion to Christianity could represent a form of resistance to the dominant outsiders' as 'the Ami do not see Christianity as a symbol of colonial oppression' (2003:277).

Although Christianity in Taiwan was not the rulers' or dominant group's religion, it did however represent the religion of powerful others in terms of its western origin. John Shepherd (1996) found out that in contrast to the resistance of the Han Chinese, the plains indigenous populations enthusiastically embraced Christianity brought to them by western missionaries in the nineteenth century. He argues that there was unequal political power between the ruling Qing dynasty and western countries, and the foreign missionaries, backed by the colonial authorities, had a powerful voice in society. Missionaries, as members of a uniquely privileged group, were inevitably identified by the populace with the imperialist powers. Shepherd asserts, '[t]o these marginal groups the missionary and his religion represented a potential source of status and power waiting to be tapped' (1996:121). In short, unlike most places around the globe where Christianity implied western domination, it separated Taiwan's Austronesian-speaking peoples from the ruling and dominant groups.

‘We have always been Christians’ was the account I often heard when I tried to find reasons for the Bunun’s conversion. It is evident, from the natives’ viewpoint, that Christianity is not a foreign borrowing but an integral part of Bunun identity. In addition, it also provides a link with the past as well as with the future and connects them to the world. In discussing the Bunun people and Christianity, this thesis investigates how people use Christianity to construct themselves and identify others. Furthermore, it explores what changes have been wrought upon both Christian and indigenous religious beliefs and practices since their encounter. I provide numerous instances about the ways Christianity has been used in the construction of the past, personhood, and ethnic identity, and how Christianity, in turn, impacted and changed particular, and sometimes conflicting, identities. The main question of my research is:

How did the Bunun’s adoption of Christianity contribute to the formation of people’s identities in terms of spiritual ideas, personhood, history, and morality?

By focusing on the relationship of Christianity and identity, this study looks at the dynamics through which different people accept, debate, and appropriate Christian and indigenous forms in which various layers of identities are constructed. Issues of identity come to the forefront, since these are very much intertwined with the adoption and appropriation of Christianity in different periods of time. My objective is to show how the appropriation of Christianity is interwoven with the Bunun’s ideas of spirits, history, personhood, morality and ethnic identity. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, during the past sixty-five years, Christianity has fulfilled many purposes for different Bunun groups. To make these dynamics visible, I apply both diachronic and synchronic methods of analysis. It is my hope to provide insights into the dynamics of accepting Christianity, together with the interactions of Christianity, Bunun culture, and identity.

## Christianity in Taiwan Austronesian Ethnography

The rapid expansion of Christianity among Taiwan's indigenous groups after World War II has been one of the fascinating themes of modern Taiwan history, especially as it emerged in different communities of distinct cultural backgrounds, with the vast majority of Taiwan's Austronesians associating themselves with different Christian denominations. According to Kuo's 1985 study, in 1982 62% of the indigenous population were Christians. It goes without saying that Christianity had changed the natural as well as social landscapes of indigenous communities, with numerous church buildings, theological schools and Christian communities constructed across the island. Christianity thus became the most widespread and pervasive religion among Taiwan's indigenous groups.

However, before the 1970s, Taiwan anthropologists did not show much interest in the study of Christianity in indigenous communities. Shiun-wei Huang argues (2012) that early anthropologists' neglect of Christianity was due to their dominant commitment to anthropology as salvage ethnography, an attempt to save and record the endangered indigenous cultures and social systems before they vanished (*cf.* Huang 1999a; Lu and Huang 2012). As in the early western Melanesian ethnography criticised by Barker (1992), Christianity was not then regarded as an essential part of Taiwan's indigenous peoples' religious lives, despite its presence in many areas. In Chiu's monograph of the Takebakha Bunun (1966), for example, he described topics such as Bunun calendrical ceremonies, life-cycle rituals, witchcraft, and taboos. However, he deliberately ignored the presence of Christianity although it had been widely accepted by local communities for more than a decade at that time. In other cases, although scholars did mention the presence of Christianity, it was treated very briefly as a foreign intrusion (e.g., Chiu 1968; Coe 1955). In short, scholars failed to

recognise the fact that many indigenous peoples actively adopted Christian organisations and practices into their social lives. Sung's paper (1963), *The Village and Inter-village Organization among Nan-ao Atayal*, provides an exception. He shed light on the consequences of the introduction of Christianity upon local indigenous communities. He discovered that the Atayal people's traditional religious and social organisation, the *gaga* ritual group, had been displaced by different Christian sects.

They [the Atayal people] received these new religions and discarded thoroughly their original *gaga*. The old form of social grouping had been broken down, but their functions are maintained continuously by the western religions which took the place of the original religion (1963:223).

In effect, Sung elucidated the intriguing contradiction that although the acceptance of Christianity would eventually lead to the collapse of an indigenous religious organisation, its function would continue in the new Christian forms. How could that be possible? I suggest that it is important to investigate the relationships between Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs and practices in specific social and cultural contexts.

With the intensified transformation of Taiwan's economy from agriculture to industry, social changes, including religious changes, have emerged as a significant research topic since the 1970s (Huang 1999a). The reasons for the indigenous peoples' acceptance or rejection of Christianity and its impacts on indigenous social lives have been hotly debated within Taiwan anthropology (*cf.* Chen 1968; Chiao 1972; Huang 1978).

Compatibility between Christian and indigenous religious beliefs and practices has been recognised as a crucial reason behind people's acceptance or rejection of

Christianity. In Lei Shih's paper on the religious changes among Valangau Ami (1976), he notes that although both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches had been working earnestly in Valangau since the end of World War II, most natives still resisted Christianity. He argues that this is '[o]wing to the Christian Church deny(ing) all other religious beliefs and rituals' (1976:127). When considering the main reason of Saisiat people's conversion to Catholicism, Shiun-wei Huang (1980) proposes that the similarities between Catholic and indigenous religious beliefs and practices, such as the complexity of the deity system and the importance of ancestor worship, propelled Saisiat people to embrace Catholicism rather than Protestant Christianity. Moreover, in his paper on the social patterns of Taiwan's indigenous groups, Ying-kuei Huang (1985) asserted that their traditional social patterns of either chief or big man determined which Christian denominations (Catholicism or Protestant) they adopted.

Clearly, these studies confirm that the indigenous cultures play significant roles in the process of the Christian encounter, and are not merely displaced by Christianity. Insisting that Christianity is a western imposition that works to supersede indigenous cultures, with continuing indigenous elements representing the rejection or subversion of Christianity these works, Ying-kuei Huang (1983:105-106) suggests, fail to put Christianity and indigenous cultures in their dynamic historical contexts and explore their dialectic relations.

Historical and social contexts in which the religious changes occurred have subsequently been highlighted by scholars. Ying-kuei Huang (1988), who conducted his fieldwork among the Tongpu Bunun of central Taiwan, observed that villagers abandoned their traditional rituals, lost faith in spirit mediums' healing powers, and moved to Christianity collectively after World War II. He saw this as an inevitable consequence of Japanese colonisation and provided the historical background of

colonial and missionary activities in Tongpu to support his argument. During Japanese rule, the Bunun were obliged to resettle in the lower regions to cultivate wet rice, which resulted in the abandonment of millet cultivation as well as a number of rituals that accompany it. Consequently, the Tongpu Bunun perceived that the diseases they suffered, such as malaria, were punishments from *dihanin* (Sky) for their failure to practise traditional rituals regarded as crucial for their practical well-being. At that critical moment, Christianity arrived in the local community and people saw Christian rituals as a new way to repair their relation with the Sky. In short, Huang explains that the Tongpu Bunun's conversion could only be perceived in terms of the traditional idea of *dihanin*.

Rather than seeing Bunun traditional religious beliefs and practices as being replaced by Christianity, he argues (1983, 1988) instead that the Bunun reproduced core values in Christianity. He observes that Bunun ancestral religious beliefs, such as *dihanin* and *hanitu* (spirits), remained constant within Christianity after conversion. Villagers often employed Christianity in support of pre-existing religious beliefs and practices. The Bunun villagers reinterpreted Christianity to make it consistent with what they already knew, and the Bunun's conversion amounted to a series of changes designed to perpetuate traditional ideas. According to Huang, one clear premise is that Christianity and traditional culture did not mix. For the Tongpu Bunun, the changes made by Christianity were superficial. They were, at their core, the same people as in pre-Christian times.

These studies are based on an assumption: religious change is in effect a contest between two distinct religious and cultural entities. Both Christianity and indigenous religions are perceived as coherent and mutually exclusive cultural systems.

Anthropologists who study the field of religious change tend to use terms such as

displacement, rejection, syncretism, or hybridisation to describe the outcomes of encounters between Christianity and indigenous religions. Kun-hui Ku (2000) has rightly argued that these perspectives seem to assume that the indigenous can easily be identified and distinguished from the imported. In fact, ‘the boundaries are sometimes blurred as new forms are used to express old themes or ostensibly imported meanings are merged with indigenous ones’ (*ibid*: 1-2).

Although we cannot avoid categories like Christianity and traditional religion, we must be careful not to think of them as coherent and separate systems (see Keesing 1989). Thus, creativity in culture and its manipulation by social actors are stressed by analysing Christian conversion in historical and social contexts, with scholars arguing that conversion to Christianity was in fact an alternative adopted by indigenes to maintain crucial cultural values and identity against the encroachment of external forces such as the state (e.g. Chang 2001; Chiu 1997; Huang 2001; Luo 2000). For example, Chiu’s master’s thesis on the Christian conversion of Mayuan Bunun in eastern Taiwan (1997) argues that religious change in Mayuan is indeed a ‘revitalization movement’ in the sense of Wallace’s term (1956). She notes, ‘by adopting the civilised Christianity to displace the outdated traditional religion, [the Bunun people] aim to “construct a more satisfying culture” in terms of “cultural transformation” and to search for a new identity and position for the whole ethnic group’ (1997:148-149). Shiun-wei Huang also argues that Christianity ‘strengthens the Ami’s confidence and expresses their difference from the Chinese’ (2003:277).

As Robert Norton argues, ‘[t]he selective use of elements of ostensibly traditional culture to affirm identity and strength in the face of economic, social and political change has recently become a major subject of anthropological research in the contemporary Pacific islands’ (1993:741). The main point I wish to make is simple:

instead of viewing both Christianity and indigenous religion as a compact entity, they are made up of different layers, complex in essence. The fabric of the interaction between Christian and indigenous religious beliefs and practices is inherently valuable and needs to be examined. Thus the continuity of a cultural system, rather than superficial changes in it, needs further investigation.

### **Thinking of Continuity, Discontinuity and Christianity**

Christianity is one of the largest world religions and is found, in one form or another, throughout the world. As Kaplan notes, this has been made possible because ‘since the great “age of exploration”, Western Christians have visited, traded with, conquered, and colonized large parts of the non-Western world’ and thus ‘[t]he encounter with Western Christianity therefore represents one of the major themes in the history of contact between Western and non-Western civilizations’ (1995:1). It goes without saying Christianity has greatly influenced the social and cultural lives of many people around the world.

As a powerful historical force that always created synergy with western colonisation and politics, Christianity is often intimately linked to changing forms of sociality. The impact brought by Christianity reconfigured the natural and socio-cultural landscapes of those groups who have converted to the ‘world religion’. For most of the history of anthropology, anthropologists have tended to associate the arrival of Christianity in indigenous societies with revolutionary changes. Aragon (2000) has rightly criticised the prevalent acculturation perspective in social science that ‘as emissaries of colonial or imperialist states, missionaries irreparably violated or degraded indigenous peoples’ cultures’ and thus ‘missionized groups have been conceived as having lost their “authentic” culture’ (Aragon 2000:8). This perception

has led to an oversimplifying assumption: people who adopted Christianity have lost their culture in the process of evangelisation and their traditional culture has nothing left worthy of investigation.

For much of the history of anthropology, anthropologists have been interested in documenting traditional cultures. They have largely ignored the fact that many of these non-Western peoples have come to profess Christianity. Christianity was frequently considered as the 'perennial outside force' (Barker 1992:165) that could never become indigenous, especially in anthropological studies of non-western or small scale societies. In reviewing the Melanesian ethnography, John Barker suggests that this was due to a too narrow understanding of cultural authenticity and traditionalism that bestowed on indigenous religions and cultures a timeless essence (1992:165). Additionally, he criticises the missionisation models that reduce Christianity to merely a 'missionary imposition' and treats religious change in dualistic terms (1992:148) that can only result in the triumph of one over the other or in an uneasy syncretism. These models, demonstrated by Barker, have obscured the agency of local people in adopting Christianity through a variety of forms. He suggests replacing the static and dualistic missionisation models with a more inclusive and dynamic framework that would allow us to consider Melanesians as the 'ultimate makers of their religions' (1990:22) and see Christianity as an integral part of Melanesian religions (1992:145). By comparing Islam in Morocco and Java, Clifford Geertz (1968) showed that the interpretation of texts and doctrines is strongly shaped by local factors. Jane Schneider and Shirley Lindenbaum have proposed that a central problem for anthropological analysis is to investigate 'how in Christianity as in Islam and Buddhism, the powerful thrust of orthodoxy interacts with, and is changed by, local religious belief and actions' (1987:2).

Recent studies by anthropologists and other scholars in different disciplines have recognised local people as active agents in the process of Christianisation in relation to the transmission and adoption of exogenous cultural elements. Steven Kaplan asserts that '[c]onfronted with a Christian "package deal", local populations have demonstrated a remarkable ability to select certain elements while rejecting others' (1995:2). To investigate the interactions between indigenous and exogenous cultural elements in the process of religious change, the term syncretism is used. As Lindstrom notes, by definition, syncretism means the hybridization or amalgamation of two or more cultural traditions. The concept of syncretism most commonly describes hybrid religious systems in anthropology, particularly those that developed in response to the disruptions of European colonialism, such as the ghost dance and cargo cults (Lindstrom 2010[1996]:680-681). Anthropological studies of Christianity outside the west have argued that syncretism means 'a continuation of previous forms of religious logic under a new, more cosmopolitan set of names' (Bialecki et al. 2008:1144). Christianity has merely been blended with elements of traditional religious beliefs that already existed. As John Bowen argues, '[s]yncretism occurs when people adopt a new religion but attempt to make it fit with older ideas and practices. The process usually involves changes in both or all of the traditions' (2005:156). The outcome of such development is what Cannel terms 'Diverse Christianities' (2006:22).

However, syncretism has lost much of its descriptive precision and many scholars have deprecated the utility of this term (e.g., Aragon 1996, 2000; Bhabha 1985). Partly this is because all cultures are comprised of a variety of exogenous elements, as Ralph Linton has argued (1937). Besides, the idea of syncretism is based on doctrines of cultural holism that assume unified and clearly defined social or cultural units that, under certain conditions, can be conceived as merging to produce novel syncretic

formations (Lindstrom 2010[1996]:680). Therefore, Christianity and local religion are considered distinct concrete entities with clear boundaries, but when Christianity crosses socio-cultural boundaries, tensions occur in translating religious elements from the language and culture of origin into a new language and culture, and also in adapting the religion to the new environment. During these processes, proponents of each religion try to preserve something of a core message, or set of practices, or allegiance. Failure to do so might prevent their recognition as legitimate practitioners (Bowen 2005:150). Notions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, ‘correct’ belief and practices, were regularly brought into play. Roff argues that one problem in the academic literature on religious change is Western scholars’ Orientalist habit of suggesting that people are not ‘really’ Muslim – or Christian – when in fact the key issue is the inevitable tension ‘between the demands of the ideal and the demands of social reality’ (1985:8). Moreover, in the face of globalisation, notions of syncretism that suggest the blending of two holistic traditions are proving inadequate to describe the mixture of multiple cultural influences that converge at the borderlands of the world system.

Although syncretism has suffered severe reassessment within the anthropological study of religion, some scholars have endeavoured to recast it and focus on the complicated series of political processes and competing discourses involved in religious encounters (Shaw and Stewart 1994:7). Others seek to explore the middle ground of integration between cultural practice and faith in which the discourses of indigenous religious beliefs arise and are contested (see MacDonald 2013). Consequently, the meaning of syncretism has been broadened to ‘an indication of indigenous creativity, agency and autonomy’, thus ‘its earlier association with cultural inauthenticity, pollution and even debasement’ has been discarded (Magowan and Gordon 2001:253). Scholars are encouraged to examine a range of cultural contexts in

which syncretism occur, scrutinise the cultural conditions of religious production, and focus on ‘the acceptance or rejection of indigenous and exogenous discourses of spirituality’ (*ibid*: 254). Processes, contexts and dynamics are put in the forefront in the study of religious change. The key topic is not whether foreign elements are introduced into cultural or religious systems, but how they are interpreted (Aragon 2000:45; Woodward 1989:17).

Anthropological studies of Christianity, as reviewed above, have investigated the complex ways in which global and local religious institutions have been mutually constituted. Nevertheless, these studies do not give equal attention to the continuous and discontinuous elements in explaining why specific cultural elements persist or change. John Barker (2007:18) reminds us that continuity thinking in the study of Christianity is likely to pose two major obstacles: first, scepticism about the depth and sincerity of converts’ grasp of Christianity, and second, a tendency to attribute Christian evangelists’ motivations and actions to their own cultural backgrounds. In his seminal paper on anthropological studies in Christianity, Joel Robbins (2007) stresses the importance of discontinuity over continuity in the study of cultural changes. He argues that the majority of anthropological studies on Christianity tend to be based on the notion of continuity that views change as a process whereby people incorporate anything new they encounter into their old understandings, and thus reproduce their traditions even though these measures would result in substantial transformations.

In many anthropological studies, the trope of rupture represented by local Christians has caused painful ethical, social, and political conflicts (Keane 2007; Keller 2005; Robbins 2004). ‘As this tension between new Christian practices and prior non-Christian practices indicates, while conversion may mark a break, it does not necessarily mark an unproblematic reduplication of missionary beliefs in converted

people’, according to Bialecki et al., who stress that ‘there is an inherent creativity in the process of (re)appropriation of Christian words and themes by those at the receiving end of missionary activity’ (2008:1144). In Rutherford’s study (2006) of the history of Christianity in Biak, West Papua, she explores the different meanings given to the power of words in the Bible by the missionaries and by the local people. Her account is set into an extensive analysis in which she emphasises that the Biak people, through their contacts with the outside world, defined themselves in terms of their abilities to appropriate exogenous signs of power, thus ‘transforming the foreign into a source of identity’ (2006:249).

Hans Reithofer, in *The Python Spirit and the Cross: Becoming Christian in a Highland Community of Papua New Guinea* (2006), provides elaborate accounts of indigenous patterns of sociality and ritual practices. He notes, after converting to Christianity, the Somaip people developed ‘a strong and pervasive perception of a great divide separating the pre-Christian past from the Christian present’ (2006:261). This is a familiar dichotomous sense of rupture between a dark, primitive, sinful and un-lightened past, and a present, pure Christian adherence. He takes

‘.. a brief look at some of the changes frequently pointed out by the Somaip in order to illustrate why the present is so fundamentally different from the past. In retrospect, all these changes are said to have already been predicted or even inaugurated by the *Ip Tand* cult and its prophets’ (2006: 263).

A solar eclipse in 1962 just before the first missionaries arrived is said to have been accompanied by a cross appearing in the east and is compared to the eclipse reported in the Bible as happening when Jesus was crucified (2006:268). These ethnographic

materials show that old and new elements are entwined, interwoven and reframed even though ‘discontinuity’ was the word in everybody’s minds.

Reithofer’s study illustrates a significant analytic point: the account of rupture and change is accompanied by a concealed but constant present sense of continuity. Stewart and Strathern make a similar statement that, ‘we cannot really measure continuity as against change because continuity and change are co-present in the same activities, albeit at different levels of immediacy’ (2009:46). John Barker’s (1993) argument of external and internal conversion also reveals the coexistence of new and old religious elements in people’s social lives. His study on the Uiaku Maisin people of the Oro province in northeast Papua New Guinea shows that the local people were converted to Christianity by Australian Anglican missionaries beginning in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, Barker observes that conversion continues to take place, and does so in two ways. The external conversion associated with the mission station has to do with trying to acculturate local people to relatively cosmopolitan ways. By contrast, the internal conversion takes place in villages, where people debate and adapt their ideas to new circumstances (1993). In short, both Christianity and indigenous culture can coexist and present different faces in terms of continuity and discontinuity.

All processes of conversion, adoption or syncretism are complicated and to gain a clear understanding of them scholars need a combination of interpretative and historical approaches. The ramifications of cosmology, history, personal agency, and social context revealed in the circumstance of religious transformation are very complex. As Robbins asserts (2007:16),

‘...in deciding whether to look at a culture as Christian what is important is not some kind of weighing of the number of Christian ideas its members have picked up against

the number of traditional ones they retain. Rather we should consider which values are organizing the relations between ideas’.

With regard to the debate about continuity and discontinuity, Stewart and Strathern (2009) propose a more elaborate analytical framework to transcend the ambivalent discourses of continuity and discontinuity. They rightly argue in support of the mutual construction of Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs and practices. In their introductory paper on religious and ritual change, they suggest that, ‘there is a more subtle, concealed element at work here’ (2009:17). Taking the two Pentecostal features of speaking in tongues and possession by the Holy Spirit as examples, they discovered that although there are no exact equivalents in indigenous Papuan cultural forms, there are still some indigenous practices which resonate with the new features. They conclude that, ‘[t]he attraction of these new experiential forms therefore resides in both their difference from and their deeper similarity to pre-Christian practices’ (2009:17). They continue to say that, ‘the new order thrives on, and actually needs, the old order as its timeless antagonist and counterpart’ and ‘Christianity... is not simply opposed to indigenous religions. It actually needs parts of the contents of those religions in order to define itself’ (2009:18). The mutual constitution of Christianity and Bunun religious beliefs and practices is indeed the main theme of this thesis.

## **Ethnographic Setting**

The Bunun settlements of Hualien County are situated along the intersection of a gentle east slope area of Taiwan’s Central Mountain Range and the western edge of the southern Huatung Rift Valley. The study was conducted over 12 months, from February 2010 to January 2011. Incidental visits were made for between three days to a week from 2011 to 2013. This research was primarily carried out in the Bunun

settlement of Luntien and the adjacent settlement of Hsiuluan, which belong to Kufeng village, the southernmost part of Chohsi Township, close to the southern border of Hualien County (Map 1). Kufeng is the third-largest village of Chohsi Township and consists of 323 household and approximately 1,159 inhabitants (Population Census 2015). During my stay, I first took Luntien and Hsiuluan as my research base camps then extended my study to other settlements.



**Map 1 Distribution of Bunun Settlements in Chohsi Township**

The Bunun people have not always lived on the lowlands as they do today. Up to about the 1930s, before the implementation of the mass resettlement program, the Bunun of Hualien County resided in the highlands of the Lakulaku River. There they lived in relatively small, family-oriented, semi-permanent settlements and travelled extensively through the interior, where they practiced slash-and-burn cultivation. Millet was their staple food and the rituals associated with its growth constituted the cycle of a year. The proper practice of rituals was essential for people's practical well-being. Despite living in the highlands, the Bunun had exchange networks with various linguistic groups in the lower reaches of the Lakulaku River for clothes, salt, and a variety of appliances.

The Bunun society was an egalitarian society that stressed equality, autonomy and competition among all individuals (Huang 1988; Yang 2001). Hierarchical relationships existed in terms of age and sex. Male elders of a family or settlement were highly respected, and the most senior man of a family was referred to as *taimi lumah* (the family head). The most senior man of a settlement was called *saspinad* (leader). In practice, leaders had no power over people since decisions were made by all the male members of a family or a settlement. The settlement was an autonomous socio-political unit, with relationships between settlements constructed in terms of kinship and marriage. There were, however, temporary alliances between settlements in times of fighting against a common enemy (Huang 1993:57).

While colonising eastern Taiwan in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Japanese colonists were attacked by headhunting expeditions of the Bunun of the Lakulaku River, who perceived the Japanese as intruders. In the 1930s, the Bunun who used to live in the highlands were forced to resettle in the lowlands to be closer to colonial administrative control. To prevent the Bunun from fighting the Japanese,

family members were dispersed, remixed and relocated with others in the lowlands. In short, the resettlement program brought many socio-cultural, economic and political changes to the Bunun people. They were in desperate need of reconstructing their social lives and identity in these new circumstances.

Luntien, as a settlement, had initially been inhabited by families of the Tak-banuaz subgroup<sup>4</sup> since the early nineteenth century (Palalavi 2000). Hsiuluan, however, was a new settlement designed by the Japanese government to accommodate the replaced Bubukun subgroup from the highlands. The current large-scale Luntien settlement, with its mix of Tak-banuaz and Bubukun subgroups is, according to local people, a relatively recent phenomenon. In 1945, Hsiuluan was destroyed in a devastating mudslide following a super typhoon. After the disaster, most of the Bubukun families moved to Luntien at the behest of the Chinese Nationalist government, and only a small number of families remained in Hsiuluan. This historical contingency meant that both settlements continued to be part of the Bunun's social lives. For example, although the local Presbyterian or Catholic Church is named 'Luntien', their membership includes both the Luntien and Hsiuluan inhabitants.

Today, Luntien and Hsiuluan settlements consist of 143 households (Luntien 118 and Hsiuluan 25) and approximately 700 inhabitants, although the number fluctuates due to the migration of people between settlements and cities. The residents of Luntien and Hsiuluan consist of an almost entirely homogeneous group of people, over 98% being Bunun. Living in such a large, permanent settlement posed a new challenge for the Bunun's identity inside and outside their communities. The Bunun emigrants created exchange networks with their various ethnic neighbours, including Han

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<sup>4</sup> The Bunun are divided into five subgroups: Bubukun (or Is-bukun), Tak-banuaz, Taki-vatan, Taki-bahka, and Taki-todo. Although they distinguish each other in terms of origin, dialect and customs, these subgroups to a large extent share a similar cultural complex.

Taiwanese and other indigenous groups. They sold crops, mountain products, or firewood to the neighbouring Han Taiwanese for cash. Sometimes, they worked as temporary day labourers for the Han Taiwanese, but these working experiences were tainted by experiences of deprivation or cheating. All in all, the post-war period may be characterised as one that called for ‘new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations’ (Hobsbawm 1983b:263). Christianity played a crucial role in the new social contexts. It not only enabled Bunun migrants of different backgrounds to format the Bunun identity, but also created a platform to connect the local with outside world.

Contemporary Bunun Christianity is diverse and becoming increasingly so in recent years. While there are two churches to which the majority of the Bunun of Hualien County belong, there is also a regular contact of new denominations from other parts of the island. For example, I observed that the believers of Jehovah’s Witness of adjacent areas made frequent door-to-door preaching in Bunun settlements. During my stay, I discovered a total of four Christian denominations in Luntien and Hsiuluan: Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), The Roman Catholic Church, Baptist and The Host of the Lord. In terms of membership, the two largest churches are PCT and Roman Catholic Church. Nearly every settlement in this region has both a Catholic and Presbyterian church building. The PCT is the dominant Christian denomination in Luntien and Hsiuluan, which is primarily because it was the first mission to enter the area in 1946. The Luntien Presbyterian Church belongs to Bunun Presbytery which is connected directly to the General Assembly of PCT (Figure 1). It has one resident pastor, six elders, six deacons, a Sunday school and four fellowships (Figure 2). Located in the main village site, it serves a congregation of fifty-nine households in 2011. The same historical factors help to explain the prominence of the Catholic

church. It was the second mission to contact the local people, crossing the Hsiukuluan River into Bunun territory in 1956. As a satellite of the Roman Catholic Church, the Luntien Catholic Church is visited several times a year by an itinerant priest who celebrates full masses on important ceremonies. It relies the rest of time on a group of lay evangelists or village leaders who run regular Sunday services. It serves a congregation of just around forty-five households. Baptist and The Host of the Lord have considerably smaller followers than the two churches already discussed. The followers have to attend the congregation in other places outside their settlements.

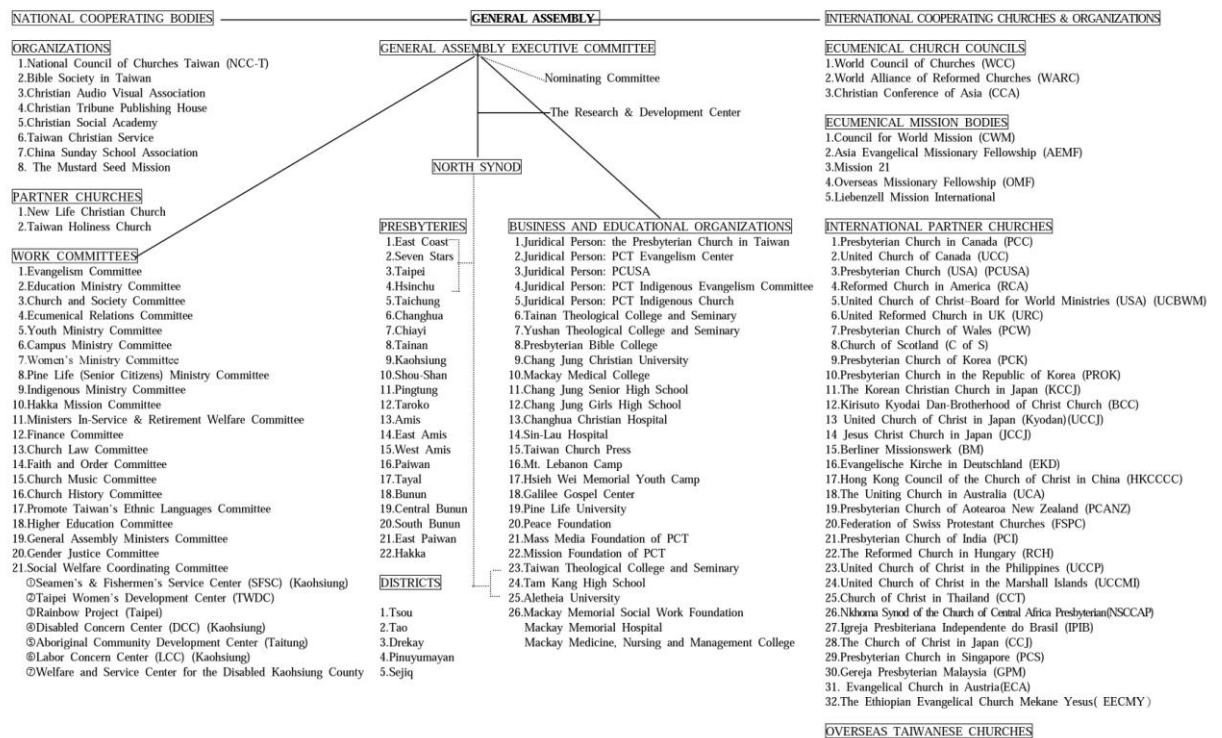


Figure 1 Organisational Structure of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (source: www.pct.org.tw)

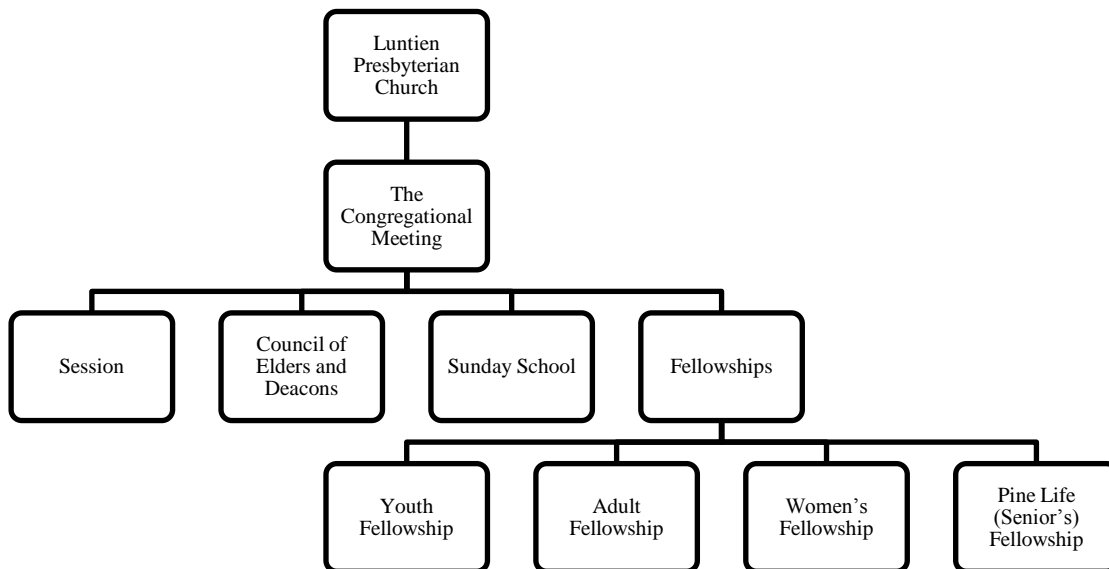


Figure 2 Organisational Structure of the Luntien Presbyterian Church

Nowadays it is estimated that more than half of the villagers are working or studying far from their homes. Many Bunun have found either permanent or temporary residences, often for work or study, in cities across the island. For example, according to church statistics of 2010, the membership of the Luntien Presbyterian Church is about two hundred and ten; however, on an ordinary Sunday service, the number of attendees is around ninety. Almost every household has at least one wage earner on whom the rural residents depend heavily. While a significant minority of people have become teachers, public servants, nurses, or office workers, most of the residents work in relatively low-paid jobs as security guards, truck drivers, construction workers, care givers, or factory workers. Although there is a primary school with a kindergarten in Luntien, students in secondary education and higher must attend schools outside the settlement.

Migrant workers and students return home for weekends or public holidays, but for most of the time, only elders, children and the unemployed stay in the settlements. However, this does not limit their access to new information, as cable TV, mobile

phones, the Internet, and other technical devices are widely used not only by youngsters, but also the elders. This implies that nobody can really describe themselves as purely village oriented, or as being isolated from the outside world.

I was frequently told by the local people that what makes their settlements distinct from other Bunun settlements in central or southern Taiwan is their easier access to the ‘outside’ world due to the proximity of urban cities. The residents of Luntien and Hsiuluan are connected to the outside world by paved roads and modern transport, including motorbikes, cars, or public buses. It takes only about twenty-five minutes by car to reach Yuli Township, the nearest town, for business, education, government offices and medical services. Easy contact with the Han Taiwanese, the dominant outsiders, has increased the Bunun’s adoption of Chinese culture and language. A Bunun man in his fifties reported to me that the Bunun of eastern Taiwan have always been champions in the national language (i.e. Mandarin) speech competitions among the Bunun. This means that the Bunun of eastern Taiwan are at risk of losing their language, as well as their identity, owing to their frequent contacts with Han society.

My first contact with Luntien and Hsiuluan began in January of 1992, as a volunteer for indigenous community services. The first Bunun I met was Cina Ibu who was born in Hsiuluan in 1940 after the resettlement program, then moved to Luntien after the devastating super typhoon. Although a female, she is knowledgeable in Bunun rituals and local genealogy because she was the eldest child of and used to work with her father. During my stay, I lived in Cina Ibu’s house with her two granddaughters, who went to a high school in the city and returned home on weekends or holidays. Cina Ibu became my surrogate mother, and always introduced me to her relatives or friends as her son. Being identified as her son created opportunities for me to build links in the kinship networks. Cina Ibu is an active Presbyterian, and through her

church connections I was soon accepted by the local Presbyterians as well as the old and new pastors. I was able to extend my research to other Bunun settlements or churches by means of connections made in Luntien and Hsiuluan.

Nevertheless, there were some unexpected problems. For example, I was expected to attend the Presbyterian instead of the Catholic congregations and Sunday services, as I lived with a Presbyterian family. In fact, since Presbyterian Christianity came earlier than Catholicism, I began my study by tracing the local Presbyterian history. Also, to have a better understanding of the contemporary religious lives of the local people in the early stages of my fieldwork, I attended as many Presbyterian services and activities as possible. My frequent attendance at Presbyterian congregations and interest in Christian teachings strongly impressed the local people who thought that I was really interested in becoming a Presbyterian, like my surrogate mother. Thus, neither the Presbyterian nor Catholic villagers could make sense of why I attended Catholic masses in the later stage of my research.

Having been told of my intention – to spend a year living in the settlement in the hopes of recording the Bunun evangelistic history – I was admonished by many people who urged me to present the ‘correct’ evangelistic history. Some people intentionally asked me to record different versions of Bunun evangelistic history that contrasted sharply with those recognised officially. These personal experiences indicate that the acceptance of Christianity is never a purely religious event, but is closely connected to moral, political, and social considerations. More to the point, the local community is never a static and homogeneous entity.

One limitation of this research must be admitted at the beginning. This study does not include much information regarding early Catholic mission history among the

Bunun of Hualien County. One reason for this exclusion has to do with the linguistic difficulty of interpreting French mission archives. The other reason is that the French priest of the Luntien Catholic Church was very ill at the time I conducted my fieldwork. Furthermore, unlike the Presbyterians, most of the local early Catholic believers had already died, and only a limited number of elders could provide information of their initial contacts with Catholicism.

Despite such limitations, I believe the material I collected from the Presbyterian side can shed sufficient light on the early encounters between the Bunun people and Christianity. Before the arrival of Roman Catholicism in the mid-1950s, the local community had experienced intensive collaborative evangelism from Han Taiwanese Presbyterian missionaries, lay persons and local Bunun evangelists. I frequently heard the Catholic and Presbyterian villagers make similar interpretations of Christianity, which further confirmed the statements made by many Bunun that they had had no idea about the differences between Christian denominations in the early stages of Christian contact.

## **Outline of the thesis**

The dynamics of the relationship between Bunun culture and Christianity in different historical contexts is the main theme of this thesis. The structure of this thesis thus reflects the chronology of the Bunun's engagement with Christianity. Concerned with the mutual construction of the Bunun people and Christianity, the forthcoming chapters are devoted to how people have used Christianity to define themselves and others.

**Chapter 1** provides an overview of some key principles of pre-Christian Bunun social life. It explores how the Bunun constructed their identity with people, nature and the spiritual world. This is an ethnographic prelude to the analytical explorations from

Chapter 2. The Bunun have experienced loss of lands, a written language, and Bunun identity during their recent history. First the Japanese, then the Chinese colonial governments ordained certain directions for them. **Chapter 2** offers insight into how the Bunun conceive of themselves as ‘historical agents’ (Ohnuki-Tierney 2001:237), as well as how they think about power, the idea of loss and rediscovery, and the nature of balance, as evidenced by the specific histories they choose to tell. These historical narratives have determined the ‘truth’ *mamantuk* of their response. Christianity has been felt as *mamantuk* because it can take the Bunun back to an authentic past when they lived on their own lands, under their own customs.

I propose that the Bunun’s adoption of Christianity took place in three major dimensions: the spiritual dimension, the ethnic dimension, and the moral dimension. To examine how the Bunun people handled these crucial issues in the wake of Christianisation, in the next three chapters, I address each dimension in a separate chapter. In **Chapter 3**, I explore why local people chose to affiliate with Christianity after a short period of resistance, and how the Bunun experienced Christianity through its healing power over sickness. Christian spirits were seen as powerful and *mamantuk* through the Bunun’s personal experience. This chapter also investigates the mutual constitution of the Christian and the pre-Christian Bunun spiritual world.

In **Chapter 4**, by examining the process of Bunun Bible translation, I argue that Christianity played a vital role not only as a buffer against official assimilation policies of the Chinese authorities, but also as means of participating fully in the new world without sacrificing their Bunun identity. In **Chapter 5**, I point out that although Bunun mortuary rituals and ideas have changed to some extent after Bunun accepted Christianity, the relationship between the spirits of the deceased and the living has remained unchanged. Christianity provided an alternative means to restore balance

between the spirit world and humans in the early stages of evangelisation, but fails to do so in the present.

By examining the construction and transformation of Bunun Christian leadership and its close relationship with the Holy Spirit, **Chapter 6** shows that the establishment and maintenance of Christianity among the Bunun is charismatic in nature. The authority of Christian leadership is based upon leaders' spiritual power in maintaining or restoring the balance between spirits and humans, outside and inside, which is a continuing line of reasoning passed down from pre-Christian times. The loss of contact with spiritual power that institutionalisation brought about drove the Bunun to rethink the role of Christian leaders. The emergence of the charismatic revival movement since the 1980s has provided an alternative method for preserving or restoring the relationship with the spiritual sphere.

In **Chapter 7**, I examine an ancestral ritual, The Shooting the Ear festival, which was revived in the 1990s as part of the state's attempt to regenerate indigenous culture as a part of Taiwanese identity. Luntien was the first to hold this festival. This generated two responses from the churches. The Catholic priest and Presbyterian pastor were willing to support the festival as long as there was no engagement with spirits. Church officials made efforts to distinguish pre-Christian Bunun religious practices as culture, not religion. However other Christians continued to believe in the possibility that this festival would engage the spirits, and so special prayers were made to God for protection from the spirits.

In the **Conclusion**, I return to some of the key analyses of Christianity presented earlier in this Introduction. I reiterate the importance of understanding the identification of people with Christianity in its historical contexts, not as the inevitable

domination of a unitary world religion over local traditions but as the complex intermeshing of beliefs and ritual practices from both external and internal sources into people's ongoing assertion of their identities in a changing world affected not only by colonial and neo-colonial governments but by people's own attempts to engage with key elements of modernity, in education, health clinics, urban labour markets and tourism development. In this dynamic it can be shown that religion is not just a spiritual or ritual activity but an essential component in people's engagement with an expanding world.

# Chapter 1 The Pre-Christian Bunun

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This thesis investigates the historical process of Christianisation and its social, political, moral, and religious accommodations among the Bunun in eastern Taiwan. Before examining what impact Christianity has made, and how it was interpreted in terms Bunun cosmology, I suggest it is crucial to know what Bunun social life was like prior to the arrival of mission influences in the late 1940s. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of pre-Christian Bunun social life through which Christianity was appropriated and adapted.

I do not intend to provide a static description of the Bunun ‘traditional’ culture at a given time before exploring the influences brought by Christianity. Such a strategy involves a neglect of historical perspective in favour of an emphasis on a fixed and unchanged Bunun traditional culture (*cf.* Chiu 1966; Huang 1978; Hsu 1987). In her paper on the Bunun spirit mediums and social change, Yang rightly argued that former research on Bunun spirit mediumship and ritual healing always saw them ‘as a bounded, isolated system and ignored socio-cultural processes and contexts’ (2006:111) and that this approach failed to delineate the sophisticated interactions between external forces and the Bunun people. In effect, variations do exist among the Bunun society diachronically and synchronically (Huang 2006; Mabuchi 1952[1951]; Sayama 2008[1919]). Nevertheless, this does not mean that a more coherent and structured Bunun traditional culture is only the product of researchers’ imaginations. In the chapters that follow, I show that both the Bunun Christian ministers and the ordinary people can clearly distinguish the differences between their pre-Christian and Christian traditions in details and principles.

Instead of constructing an authentic Bunun tradition or culture in pre-Christian times, I investigate in this chapter some key principles of pre-Christian Bunun social life. This chapter begins by examining the process of constructing the ‘Bunun people’ and asking whether the defining criteria adopted by Japanese colonists could also be found among the Bunun. It then explores how the Bunun constructed their identity with people, nature and the spiritual world. I argue that the Bunun did not distinguish the spiritual domain from the rest of social life. They treated the *hanitu*, or spirits as a natural part of everyday life actions and ideas. Finally, this chapter illustrates that the key principle of pre-Christian Bunun social life was the maintenance and restoration of balance between humans and spirits. It was this balance which made the world run smoothly.

### **Constructing the Bunun**

Bunun as the collective name of a specific group of people did not appear until the early Japanese period in 1898. The word ‘Bunun’ comes from their vernacular *bunun*, which meant ‘human beings’. Haisul Palalavi, a Bunun scholar, indicated the meanings of the term *bunun* are twofold. In a narrow sense, it is the name of a group of people who are supposed to share similar cultural and social characteristics. In the broader sense, it refers to human beings (2006:87). Palalavi further explored the transformation of the meaning of the word *bunun* by examining the Bunun oral tradition. He suggested that during the *min-pakaliva* (the myth period) the distinction between humans and natural beings was not clear. Humans cohabited with animals and they could communicate with each other. At that time, the term *bunun* was the terminology reserved for the natural beings we called humans today. After the primordial flood,

humans left the mountains and migrated down to different places.<sup>5</sup> It was the time when distinct, named groups evolved. Since then, to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups, the Bunun have called themselves *bunun tuza*, or the ‘true humans’ (2006:87).

The Bunun’s contact with outside forces can be illustrated in terms of a series of names given to them by foreigners. Official contact between the Qing regime<sup>6</sup> and the Bunun had commenced by the mid-nineteenth century (Chen 1984). The Bunun people who lived in the mountains were placed into the generic ethnic category of ‘raw barbarians’ by the Qing regime, as they were the people who refused the rule of the Qing Empire, had limited contact with Han culture, and lived beyond Qing jurisdiction. This reveals that the degree of acculturation and political submission or hostility to the Qing regime was the vital criterion defining the group at that time.

Taiwan was ceded to Japan after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Japanese colonists began their rule among indigenous populations by formally identifying ethnic groups in terms of distinct language, physical, or socio-cultural standards. Nagano Yoshitora, a Japanese army infantry lieutenant, was the first representative of the Japanese military to make contact with the Bunun in a patrol between September and October 1896. In the expeditionary report, he sketched the geography, landscapes, settlements, people, and customs of the ‘Mountain Barbarians’ or the ‘Raw Barbarians’ (1988[1896]). The Bunun were among the peoples he called the ‘Mountain Barbarians’.

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<sup>5</sup> There are many versions of the Deluge myth reiterated in Bunun society, in spite of their variation in details, the main theme is: in ancient times, a devastating flood occurred, with the rapid rise of water, people as well as animals were forced to move to the top of Jade Mountain, which is the highest mountain in Taiwan. After the recession of the flood waters, people moved down and migrated to other places.

<sup>6</sup> The Qing dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China, ruling from 1644 to 1912. It was based on the Mainland China. The Qing dynasty formally annexed Taiwan and placed it under the jurisdiction of Fujian province in 1683 and was elevated as a province in 1887.

In the same year (1896), Torii Ryuzo, a Japanese junior researcher appointed by Tokyo Imperial University as a temporary employee, initiated his first ethnographic investigation among the territories of 'Raw Barbarians' in eastern Taiwan between July and December. This expedition was sponsored by the Japanese National Diet to acquire basic information about the headhunting peoples and initiate colonial rule. Such scholarship was driven not merely by academic interests, but by colonial needs to lay a claim to the peoples and territories of this area. Ryuzo's first expeditionary report was published in the *Journal of Tokyo Anthropological Association* in 1897. This report, based on first hand data collected during the expedition, is noteworthy less for its accuracy than for the brief classification of the different indigenous groups of eastern Taiwan by their distribution, migration, customs, domiciles, physical characteristics and apparel. Among Ryuzo's classifications, the people who inhabited the Abala settlement of eastern Taiwan were categorised as a distinct ethnic group. He gave the general name 'Mountain Barbarians' to them. In effect, as mentioned by Ryuzo, this was not a term used by the people themselves, but by the nearby Han people. At the same time, this group had also been called 'Iwatan' by the neighbouring Amis people (Ryuzo 1996[1896]).

In 1898, Kanori Ino, a Japanese anthropologist, initiated the first official proposal for the classification of Taiwan's indigenous population. He divided the indigenous peoples into eight groups in terms of their physical characteristics, body decoration, religion, handicrafts, social organisation, customs, oral history, and language. The term Vonum was used to identify the people we call Bunun today. Furthermore the Vonum were composed of three subgroups: Matsoan-Vonum, Rakvisyan-Vonum and Sevukun (as cited in Chen 1998:104-106). Ino's classificatory framework was modified slightly by another Japanese anthropologist, Torii Ryuzo. In 1900, Ryuzo proposed classifying

the Taiwan indigenous peoples into nine groups instead of eight according to their customs, languages and heritages (Chen 2004:77-78). In his framework, people living in southern, eastern and central regions of the Central Mountain Range were named as Vunun. Ryuzo's proposal had an influential impact on the official Japanese classification of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Subsequently, the term Vunun, another spelling of Bunun, as the name of a specific group of people with definite ethnic boundaries and socio-cultural characteristics was fixed. This was made possible through the joint endeavours of the colonial government and academia.

We do not know the initial reactions of the people identified as Bunun during the early stage of colonial contacts because they were undocumented. It is noteworthy that the native composition of the Bunun is quite similar to the official framework. The Bunun people are composed of five ethno-linguistic subgroups: Taki-tudu, Taki-bakha, Tak-banuaz, Taki-vatan, and Bubukun (or Is-bukun). However, compared to official classification, it was not the objective cultural characteristics which construed the Bunun people; instead, according to the Bunun, it was their cultural concepts and practices which bound them together. The construction of the Bunun group was closely related to their idea of originality. In his unpublished manuscript written in the Bunun romanised script, *The Genealogy of the Bunun people* (1990), a Bunun Presbyterian pastor, Talima Nahaisulan traces the origin of the Bunun people as below, together with my translation.

*mais sanasiya, imita mai madadaingad tu sin dailang hai, akata bunun  
hai, mais na siya hahima (a-ima) tu taisan, minoni hahima (a-ima) tu  
sidoh.*

According to our ancestors' tradition, we the Bunun people originated from five brothers, and they became five subgroups.

In his remarks, the primordial house and relation were emphasised. Talima Nahsisulan indicates that all Bunun people originated from one family and the founding fathers of each subgroup were siblings. The Bunun perceive their origin in the Asang Daingad (literally, the large settlement), or Lamungan in which they were family. The different subgroups were developed after the male siblings moved to other places and established their own families. This is evidenced in the names of the Bunun subgroups. The name of the Bunun subgroup is composed of the prefix *taki-* or *tak-* meaning 'inhabit' or 'live' and the noun root of the name of the founding male ancestor. For example, the Taki-tudu means the place where Tudu lived. The *bu-* in Bubukun is CV-reduplication: it repeats the first syllable of Bukun, a male ancestor. Bubukun means something like 'the Bukuns' or 'the people of Bukun'. We do not have any exact data about the actual population of each subgroup. However, according to the Bunun, the Bubukun is the largest subgroup and dialect, followed by Tak-banuaz and Taki-vatan.

The house is given great prominence in Bunun society. All the Bunun say they originated from 'one' house. Like other houses in Austronesian-speaking societies, the Bunun house 'as a physical entity and as a cultural category, has the capacity to provide social continuity' (Fox 1993:1). It is the basic unit and prototype of Bunun social structure, and the origin of group or individual identity. In the section that follows, by examining *lumah* as a physical structure and as a cultural category, I investigate the ways the Bunun constructed their relationship before the arrival of Christianity.

## *Lumah as the House and Family*

Like the longhouse of Iban studied by Freeman (1955) or the Kantu explored by Dove (1985) among Borneo peoples, the Bunun house was the physical and social prominence of the local societies. Early pioneer explorers who travelled the Bunun territory reported that the most salient physical attraction of traditional Bunun settlements was the long and narrow *lumah* house. It was an attenuated structure made by digging into a hillside, supported on hard-wood posts, and its roof covered with stone slates, wooden shingles, bark, or whatever other materials were available. It stretched for eight metres or more, faced the valley or pointed downstream (Huang 1999). Houses were occupied by extended family groups (also termed *lumah*) that constituted the basic unit of Bunun society. As observed by Mabuchi, ‘[a]mong the Bunun, the average number of persons per household is a little less than ten. This unit is often a joint family, members of which amount to twenty, thirty, or more’ (1952[1951]:192-193). The inner layout of a house included:

- (a) the *bukzavan*, or living room,
- (b) the *patcilasan*, or granary,
- (c) the *sapalan*, or bedroom,
- (d) the *baning*, or stove.

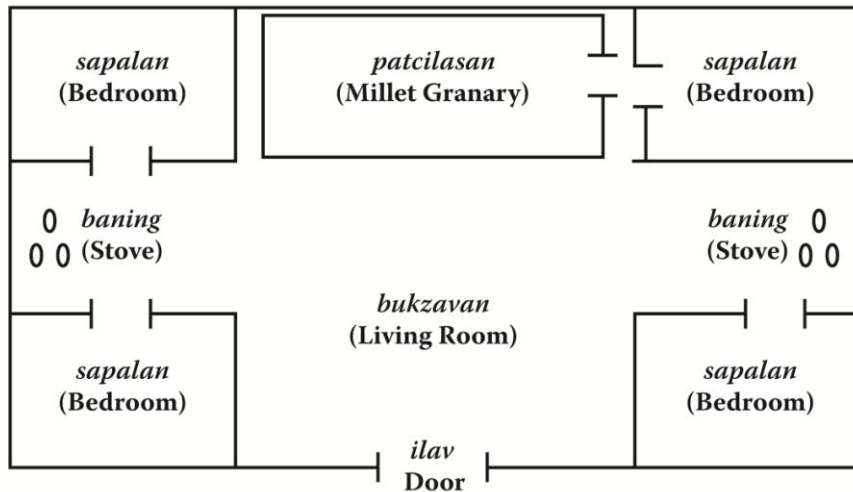


Figure 3 The Layout of the Bunun house (source: Huang 1995, with slightly modification)

The *bukzavan* was the family living room for cooking, eating and multiple domestic tasks. Each *bukzavan* was equipped with two cooking places, or *baning* (stove), traditionally situated at the left and right sides of a house. The stove consisted of a rough scaffolding of three upright stones which supported a cooking pot. On the stove of the right side, women cooked millet – the staple food of the Bunun – and the meats, taro, and sweet potatoes that accompanied it. The stove on the left was used to cook food for pigs (Huang 1995). All family members, regardless of their age and sex, ate together in their *bukzavan*, squatting in a circle around the pot and eating with a spoon. There were several bedrooms *sapalan* surrounding the living room. Each one was occupied by a nuclear family. A house, then, was made up of several nuclear families, and in most cases, the heads of each nuclear family were male siblings. As many scholars have noted (Chen 1955; Mabuchi 1960; Okada 1988[1938]), the extended family was the ideal model of the Bunun family. On average, a house consisted of a father and mother with their married sons and their families, together with unmarried sons and daughters. Daughters went to other houses upon marriage.

Food-sharing terms within a family were used to denote social groups of varying sizes. The local terms, such as *tastu pandia* (the same meal), *tastu baning* (the same stove), are used to identify a family member. These terms can further allude to the kin group above the family level. Like the Gerai among Borneo people, the principle of sharing within the rice group is greatly stressed (Helliwell 2000). The Bunun perceived the people of a kin group as originating from a family in which they shared food together even though the exact genealogical connection could not be clearly traced. The idea of belonging within a kin group is illustrated in the native term *kautuszang* which means ‘(we are) the same’, the Bunun reported.

Under the floor of *bukzavan* was the place where the deceased family members stayed eternally. According to Bunun religious beliefs, when a family member died from natural causes, such as illness, it was considered as a good death, or *masial mataz*. At the time of death, the body was bathed, dressed up, and then put in a squatting position by attaching the knees to the chest by bending the legs (Huang 1988:110). Chiu (1966:72) noted that the body faced the direction of sunset. Chiao (1960:103) also stated that some Bunun put the body facing west. This meant that the *hanitu* or spirits would return to their homeland, called Lamungan or Mai-asang, the place where the sun sets.

Bunun believed that after the deceased was gone physically, his or her *hanitu*, or spirit still remained with the living. If the deceased had made major contributions to the community they were buried near the front door of the house so that their spirits would protect the surviving members of the domestic unit (Huang 1995:71). When they had daily meals, special events or ceremonies, it was important to call the deceased by name and feed them with small amounts of rice, meat or wine (*pakaun hanitu* literally means ‘to feed the spirits’). The practice of in-house burial did not

mean that house was the only place to worship the spirits of the dead. Indeed, the Bunun often abandoned their houses to migrate to new areas in search of better places for cultivation and hunting. They called the spirits of the dead to join them when performing rituals.

The granary, or *patcilasan*, was another crucial element in the composition of a house. As Huang suggests, it ‘was the most sacred place of the house and stood for the private and exclusive right of the household members to this house’ (1988:117). It was situated opposite of the door inside the house. Millet (*maduh*) was the most highly valued crop in Bunun society, and most annual calendrical rituals were centred largely upon it. They cautiously deposited it, bunch by bunch, in the granary. The quantity and quality of millet symbolised both the economic and cultural values of a family, such as fortune, prosperity, fertility, productivity, wealth, and diligence. The sacred millet, called *hulan*, collected by the family head from the harvest of the past year, was kept in a basket which was usually hung up in the granary. The *hulan* was sowed on the ritual field in the planting ritual (*lusan minpinang*). This basket ought not to be touched by any non-family member for it would endanger the life of the family members. If that happened, the house would be abandoned (Huang 1988:163). The importance of millet made the granary an exclusive space of the house and outsiders were prohibited from entering it. In short, the practices of in-house burial and the millet rituals made the *lumah* not only a place of residence, and a basic unit of production, but also a ritual unit. As Yang concludes, ‘[a]s with many Austronesian groups, the Bunun house was both a kinship group and a ritual entity’ (2001:30).

## House Membership Through Food-sharing

Viewed superficially, the Bunun house had the appearance of being a single structural unit, and many scholars have made the conclusion that the extended family was the ideal model of the Bunun house organised mainly on the principle of patrilineal descent (Chen 1955; Mabuchi 1960). Nevertheless, this statement does not reflect their actual social behaviour. In his study, Okada (1988[1938]) showed that although the members of a house were always related in terms of patrilineal kinship and affinity, 25% of Bunun households contained members without any consanguineous or affinal relationships. How could this happen? To answer this question, I suggest it is crucial to ask: how does an individual become a house member? In other words, what are the principles of recruitment for a family?

At any given time, every Bunun was a member of one particular house, and only one. In most cases, a person was born into one particular house and this was often the house of his or her father for virilocal residence. Although a person could claim rights to his or her father's house by birth, effective membership could only be achieved by living, eating and practicing rituals in a house over a period of time. In Okada's study (1988[1938]), he shows there was a man named Atol who originally belonged to the Is-hahavut kin group by birth, but he was brought up by the Take-hunan kin group. He had detached himself from the Is-hahavut and affiliated with the Take-hunan kin group. Based on this finding, Okada proposed, '[t]he main criterion for membership in a kin group is consanguinity. Aside from that, people can become family members through living and growing up in the house' (1988[1938]:7). Yang also points out that the house 'was organised mainly according to the principle of patrilineal descent, but it could easily incorporate members from different patrilineal clans through various ways

such as adoption and marriage, or simply through the sharing of space and activities' (2001:30).

Two disparate criteria are revealed in Yang's account: patrilineal descent and local residence. By birth, every person was potentially a member of his or her father's family, but one's membership was acquired through living, working and eating in a domicile. In Chiu's study (1966) of the Tannan Bunun of central Taiwan, he gave us very detailed descriptions regarding how a new family member, such as a bride, a child under two years old, or an adopted child, was incorporated into a family in terms of food-sharing. He stated (1966:66-68):

When the bride went to the groom's house after marriage, she was not allowed to eat the sacred millet of her husband's family at first. She could only do so after practicing a ritual, called *paluts-anun*. In preparing for this ritual, the ritual leader first collected one stem of sacred millet from each family of a moiety and formed a millet bunch. Then he took it into the granary...On the ritual day, a pig was slaughtered and cooked. Four small pieces of cooked pork, skin, heart, liver, lungs and more, except the bowels, were cut and each piece pierced by the stems of the millet bunch. The bride was taken into the granary...She sat in the granary and her father-in-law circled her with the pig head, holding it by its ears above her head while he prayed...After praying, the bride had to live in the granary for a month....Her food was millet and pork only. The millet was cooked by her mother-in-law using the sacred millet in the granary.

Chiu's description shows that a new family membership was acquired in terms of food-sharing. Thus, the married woman had to be very careful not to eat the sacred millet of her natal family.

Membership in a family was affirmed through the regular sharing of taboo food, such as the sacred millet, in annual calendrical rituals. For example, at the ritual of *andaza* (the piling up the millet in the granary), a pig was killed as sacrifice to the millet spirits. The Bunun perceived that millet had a spirit and the pig was the tribute they promised to offer at the planting ceremony. When the newly-harvested millet was cooked, all the family members ate the millet and pork together. Food shared by a family was considered taboo for others, and food and drink mixed or sprinkled with the sacred millet became taboo to those who were not members of the family (Mabuchi 1987[1974]:175). If a person happened to eat the sacred millet of another family accidentally, he or she would put his or her life, as well as the members of that entire family, under threat. The only way to resolve this potentially lethal problem was to recruit this person into the family (Okada 1988[1938]:7). Conversely, to stop consuming the sacred food was a conspicuous message about terminating membership or relationship (Okada 1988[1938]:8; Wu 1999).

The sharing of millet among a specific group of people was not merely a social action but had spiritual implications. As Mabuchi indicated (1987[1974]), the Bunun perceived that the millet spirit had five ears, and it could listen to the prayers made by ritual practitioners. By examining Bunun agricultural rituals, Huang concludes, through ritual practices ‘the Bunun expressed subordination (through taboo and praying) and negotiation (through the sacrifice of the pig) relationships with the millet or its *hanido*’ (1988:168). Cheng also argues that the sharing of millet could produce and reproduce a kind of spiritual connection among a family (1989:23).

Aside from the millet, Mabuchi (1987[1974]) draws our attention to the sharing and presentation of meat among the Bunun communities which not only affirmed people’s relationship but also revealed the belief in spirits. The Bunun strongly

asserted that the meat should be distributed in a fair and just way. This meant that everyone had an equal share regardless of age, sex, or social status. Unfair distribution of meat would cause friction and quarrels, which were regarded as the cause of hunting failure, poor harvest, or sickness. The Bunun perceived that human emotions, such as delight, anger, affection or hatred were propelled by the soul with spiritual consequences on human welfare. The friction caused by someone's 'ill heart' (*madikla is-ang*) would result in a range of misfortunes in people's day-to-day lives. Subsequently, this was the main reason for a group's separation (Mabuchi 1987[1974]:166).

The descriptions above attest that the concept of spirits permeated many aspects of Bunun social life. The sharing of tabooed food among a group was related to the category of kinship as well as the spiritual domain. Thus, the concept of spirits was the key principle in Bunun social lives and could not be confined to a single category, such as religion that we resort to today.

### **Pre-Christian Religious Beliefs and Practices**

More than a century of research has provided us with numerous ethnographic data concerning Bunun pre-Christian religious life. Among them, Sayama's book, *Research Report on the Bunun*, published in 1919, is considered the first Bunun ethnography (Yang 2001). This report covered an extensive range of topics, including social organisation, the calendrical ceremonies, life-cycle rituals, religion, headhunting, dwellings, agriculture, and myths. Although this report has its limitations (Yang 2001:12), however, this book provides us with rich source of ethnographic information regarding the Bunun social life prior to intensive colonial domination. In this report, Bunun religious practices and beliefs were not only recorded in two consecutive

chapters as the Calendrical Ceremony (Chapter 3) and Religion (Chapter 4) but also scattered throughout many sections, such as in relation to headhunting, birth, naming, and death. I suggest, according to Sayama's report, that these Bunun religious beliefs and practices focused on three domains: *hanitu* (the spirits), *is-ang* (the breath, soul), and *dihanin* (the sky). I delineate each of them in turn in the sections that follow.

### *Hanitu (Spirits)*

*Hanitu*, a general term for invisible beings or spirits, was central to Bunun social life. The Bunun language does not use specific pluralizers, so this term can be plural or singular. The Bunun perceived humans as coexisting with a variety of unseen *hanitu*, such as the spirits of lands or objects, wandering spiritual beings, ancestral spirits, and the left and right spirits of living people. All of them were called *hanitu*, and were part of the ordinary world rather than being supernatural.

### *The Spirit of the Living Creature or Natural Object*

The first category of *hanitu* is the spirit of the living creature or natural object. According to Huang's study (1988:97), the Bunun perceived that animate and inanimate objects, such as animals, plants, land or rocks, had spirits with distinct and varied forces. The strength of *hanitu* was innate. Its *hanitu* left when an object vanished or died. None of the *hanitu* within this category was either specifically male or female, or appeared to humans in a particular physical form. That is, they were not defined according to number and gender, nor were they visualised in any specific form.

According to the data I collected in the field, the elders perceived that the land had its *hanitu* that occupied it before humans arrived. The *hanitu* of the land took charge of hunting, agricultural production, and inhabitation. They were regarded as the predecessors or the original owners of the land, and they allowed humans to utilise the

land when proper rituals had been performed. Ritual leaders (*tanhapu lus'an* or *Lisigadan lus'an*) were the intermediaries between the humans and the invisible spirits. Huang's study of the Tongpu Bunun in central Taiwan (1988) provides us with a very detailed description of how the Bunun interacted with the land spirits in terms of ritual practices. For example in the land-opening ritual (*mapudahu*), it was the ritual leader who determined the time of the ceremony. Before the ritual was held, the ritual practitioner went to the field to choose a specific small piece of land for ritual performance. If he came across a snake or field mouse on his way to the field he saw this as an omen, and returned home immediately to try again the next day. Arriving at the field, he cut down a tree and prayed to the land's spirit, asking its permission to use the land. Early next morning, he checked his dream of the previous night. If the dream was auspicious, such as portraying him receiving clothes, meat, or a hunting machete from people, he would go to the same place. If the dream was inauspicious, he abandoned what he had done and looked elsewhere. On the day of the ritual, he stuck some miscanthus grass (*Miscanthus floridulus*) into the field and prayed to the land's spirit for a good harvest. After the ritual leader had accomplished his work, the male heads of households throughout the settlement followed suit. The ritual leader was thought to have the strongest *masial hanitu*, or benevolent spirit, which I will explain in the next section, who could persuade and influence the land spirits (Huang 1988:148-149).

As claimed by elders, the gun used for hunting or headhunting had its *hanitu* as well. The Bunun practiced a ritual called *pislahi* before their hunting or headhunting expeditions. All of the guns were placed on the ground and a song was sung to propitiate the spirits of the gun and invoke the spirits of the animals to invite their family or friends to be shot by the guns. Millet wine dregs were sprinkled as an

offering (Chapter 7). If a man was accidentally killed by a gun, the Bunun perceived that it was the gun's spirit, rather than the person who fired the gun, that was guilty. Subsequently, the gun had to be buried immediately (Historical Research Committee of Taiwan Province 1987:228).

### *The Spirits of Living People*

The second category of spirits was the spirits of living people who comprised the intrinsic parts of a person. Spatial imagery predominated in discussion about the *hanitu* of the living, even though it was said not to be visible in the body. According to the Bunun concept of personhood, a person was made up of three parts: the external body, called *lotbu*, which came from one's mother; the *hanitu*, which came from one's father; and the *is-ang* (Huang 1988, 1992). It was not clearly defined whether the *hanitu* from one's father referred to the two *hanitu* of the left and right shoulders. In addition, human beings were thought to have two *hanitu*, an amicable one (*masial hanitu*, or good spirit) on the right shoulder and an irritable one (*makuang hanitu*, or bad spirit) on the left. Both the *masial hanitu* and *makuang hanitu* would vanish after a person's demise (Huang 1992:195-198). Mabuchi (1952[1951]:196) described the nature of the two spirits of living people:

According to the belief of Bunun, a person has two spirits. One spirit in the right shoulder is mild, amicable, and generous. Another in the left shoulder is wild, irritable, and miserly. While these spirits are invoked by mental state of the person concerned, they have also their own independent will or feeling and affect in turn the mental state of that person.

Ideas about the interaction of the *hanitu* of the living with other parts of a person, including bodily aspects and with the outside world, were of great significance among

the Bunun. Mabuchi (1987[1974]:225) mentioned that either of the two spirits could be stimulated by the mental state of a person, such as delight, anger, affection or hatred; both of them also had their own will to act regardless of a person's intention. Huang also points out that at times the two spirits pushed in opposite directions, leading to conflict or indecisiveness. In such a situation, *is-ang* played a significant role in determining the result (1988:98-100).

The *hanitu* of a person were potentially independent of the person's body. *Hanitu* were spoken of as going out of the human body in sleep, and dreams reflected their journeys. As Sayama noted, the Bunun proclaimed that 'when *hanitu* leave the body, the person sleeps immediately' (2008[1919]:73). Huang also indicates, when sleeping, the two *hanitu* left a person's body and made their separate journeys, which resulted in the different consequences of dreams. Huang describes (1988:100-101):

When a person's *makwan hanido* came across and reacted to something or to another *hanido*, the person would have a *makwan* dream, such as killing a person.... When the person was dreaming, these two human *hanido* could communicate with the *hanido* of other things, and their action in dreams could be used as omens to predict the result or outcome of the dreamer's future actions.

The distinction between *masial* and *makuang* is particularly crucial here. Huang (1988:98) suggests that *masial* meant collective, cooperative and altruistic and *masial hanitu* was the intrinsic force that could drive a person to act for the benefit of the whole group. In short, *masial* indicated that something was accepted as proper, as effective, as correct. On the other hand, *makaung* meant selfish, competitive and changeable and *makuang hanitu* would act only for his/her private benefit. Anger was not *masial*, it was *makaung*. Anger reflected something that was harmful to social

relations and needed to be balanced. The Bunun thought social harmony was achieved through the behaviour of *masial hanitu* on the right shoulder and social disorder was driven by the influences of *makuang hanitu* on the left shoulder. The maintenance or restoration of the balance between humans and the spirits was crucial for people's practical well-being.

### *The Spirits of Ancestors*

The third category of spirits was the ancestral spirits. There is no specific term referring to the ancestral spirit in Bunun language. The ancestral spirits played significant roles in Bunun daily life. Their spirits could give blessings or dispense punishment to the descendants. The Bunun paid attention to the messages brought to them by ancestral spirits in dreams. The ancestral spirits did not aid or punish their descendants at will. It depended on how the living had treated them. The Bunun held the conviction that the proper treatment of the ancestral spirits was a moral obligation.

However, not every deceased person was able to become an ancestor. The Bunun perceived that, at death, the person's *is-ang*, or soul (see below) left the human body and became *hanitu*. A death caused by illness was viewed as a good death (*masial mataz*) resulting in the *is-ang* becoming a benevolent spirit (*masial hanitu*) and going to Mai-asang or Lamungan. The afterlife was called 'homeland' by the Bunun, where the deceased spirits of a family lived under the same roof, grew millet, taro and sweet potato, and went hunting, just like in the lives of this world. But an accidental or violent death would make a person's soul become the bad spirit (*makuang hanitu*). The bad spirits could not go to the legendary homeland, but wandered in this world, and were the causes of misfortunes, accidents and diseases.

## *The Wandering Spiritual Beings*

The fourth category of *hanitu* refers to those with no set abode. These various spirits own nothing themselves, and hence desire to harass or punish the living. They were unseen entities and regarded as dangerous and evil spirits. Unlike the spirits of living people who had no physical appearance, *hanitu* in this category had particular physical forms, and people named them after their physical appearances or distinctive characteristics, such as the giant spirits (Qanasilis), the big-eared spirits (Mamantainga) and the spirits with giant torsos who like to eat children (Sayama 2008[1919]:61-62). Generally speaking, the Bunun had no idea where these *hanitu* came from, except possibly the spirits of people who died bad deaths.

## *Spirit Mediums*

In pre-Christian Bunun society, the spirit medium was the person who could observe and communicate with spirits through her or his techniques. The Bunun perceived disease was caused in two ways, first by the malevolent actions practiced by spirit mediums who projected various disease-producing objects (*haiza*, such as a bamboo needle) into the victim's body, and secondly by the malevolent actions carried out by evil spirits. From the Bunun viewpoint, illness occurred when spirits invaded a person's body disrupting their spiritual balance. If the person's good spirit could not defeat the intruder, the person became sick (Sayama 2008[1919]:82). In either case, the victim would resort to the spirit mediums for treatment.

There were two kinds of spirit mediums in Bunun society: the instructed spirit mediums who acquired their power through the instruction of senior spirit mediums in the annual séance (*pistahu*), and the inspired spirit mediums who relied on the power or knowledge imparted to them by the spirits in dreams. The first were adept in sorcery

and curing while the second were restricted to curing sickness. The instructed spirit mediums were believed to have the technique to *palinanutu hanitu*, to talk or negotiate with spirits and this made them the intermediaries between the humans and the spirit. Eloquence was an important requirement of being a religious specialist in Bunun society. Even though the spirit medium had to go to the fields to earn her or his living just like ordinary people, this ability to cure illness through communication with spirit made them highly respected by the Bunun.

### *Is-ang (the Breath, Heart, and Soul)*

In Bunun vernacular, *is-ang* is a term with multiple meanings, including breath, heart, and soul. *Is-ang* is the life-force or spirit being which dwells in a person's body during their life time (Fang 1998). Not only humans, but also all living, breathing animals have *is-ang*. In Huang's study (1988, 1992), *is-ang* was originally thought of as residing in the middle of the chest. Contrasting to the body and the spirits of a person, the *is-ang* was an innate self that represented one's own will, unrelated to one's parents. *Is-ang* had to do with understanding the world, reacting to events and learning from them. The strength of *is-ang* was closely linked to the development and maturation of a person. The power of *is-ang* grew stronger and then declined with the development of a person's life cycle. As mentioned in previous sections, the mental state of *is-ang* could propel either of the two spirits to act. At the same time, *is-ang* could mediate conflicts between two *hanitu* of a person, suggesting that *is-ang* had a will of its own.

*Is-ang* was a separate element of a person. The Bunun perceived that *is-ang* left a person's body when it was frightened or driven out by the malevolent *hanitu*. It was the time when imbalance occurred. It was a life and death issue if the *is-ang* left the body for a long while, as a person would lose vitality and die without *is-ang*. In this

situation, people resorted to the spirit mediums to practice a ritual called *makusuhis is-ang* (literally, to recall the soul). Thus it is of the greatest importance to realise that for the Bunun the *hanitu* and *is-ang* were in an internal communicative relationship with other aspects of the body, inside and outside, making the body a whole entity. In short, the sound condition of a person depended on the spiritual balance between the two spirits and the soul. The key principle exists prior to the introduction of Christianity.

### *Dihanin (The Sky)*

In the Bunun language, the term *dihanin* means both sky and celestial phenomena. In the former, it can be used in a sentence like this: *Isia dihanin hai, supah a hazan kusbabai*, literally translated ‘In sky, many birds flying’. The latter is used in the sentence as: *Aip hai, hudanan tu dihanin*, literally translated ‘Today, the raining sky’.

In contrast to *hanitu* which were thought to cohabit and have close relationships with the living, *dihanin* was vaguely described as a domain with prominent power. *Dihanin* was widely revered by the Bunun people. They perceived that the power of *dihanin* was performed in a variety of celestial phenomena and natural disasters, including wind, rain, thunder, lightning, earthquakes, droughts, and floods. When disaster occurred, the Bunun propitiated *dihanin* to rescue them. Samaya (2008[1919]:75, as cited in Huang 1988:174) provided a detailed description of how the Bunun ameliorated a flood by performing a ritual to *dihanin*.

When there is a flood and it keeps raining, the Bunun usually burn some used pig scapulae, throw them up to the sky through the roof window, and pray to the sky (*dehanin*) for good weather.

However, as Huang states, '[t]his kind of ritual was performed only occasionally, not regularly' (1988:174). He continues, '[g]enerally speaking, *dehanin* was the sky or any celestial body to the pre-Christian Bunun. Since it was not very active, most people did not pay attention to it in their ordinary lives except during the time of disaster' (1988:178).

For the Bunun people, *dihanin* played an important role as the prominent supervisor or arbiter of morality (Huang 1988; Mabuchi 1987[1974]; Yang 2001). It was omnipresent because it was in the high sky. Whenever they were being treated unfairly or unjustly, the Bunun people would resort to *dihanin*. They faced the sky, called out or screamed: *isa ka su dihanin*, 'Where are you, *dihanin*?' or *saduan dihanin*, 'Seen *dihanin*', implying that what they had done had been observed by *dihanin*. They deeply held the conviction that *dihanin* was a force for morality, punishing humans for their immorality. In general, according to the Bunun, *dihanin* had no concrete form. It was a force and principle rather than personages, and did not directly engage in people's everyday events except in times of natural disasters or in cases of injustice.

It is particularly noteworthy that on those occasions in Bunun oral stories when *dihanin* became personified, it was as a woman and child and or Moon/ Sun who prescribed rituals and taboos. In Sayama's work (2008[1919]:187, as cited in Huang 1988:175), he collected one myth that showed the sky beings as persons who descended from the sky with an invaluable gift only to return to the sky when the Bunun man broke his promise. The story goes:

In ancient times, a Bunun lived all alone by himself. One day, a woman came to his house with her little son. She showed him a calabash and told him, "In this calabash is the crop called millet. It is very delicious. One grain of millet is enough for all of us for

one meal. So long as we have this calabash, we can avoid suffering from starvation forever. And you do not need to go hunting in the mountains. Besides, the millet in this calabash has the characteristic of reproducing itself. When you bury it in the soil, you can get thousands of millet grains in the future. But, I will not give this calabash to you unless you agree to live together with me and my son". The man agreed to marry her. Then one day while she went out to fetch a pail of water, the boy was crying loudly. Annoyed by his crying, the man scolded the boy very severely. At that time, his wife came back home and saw what had happened. She was very angry and said: "He is my life, how can you scold him like this? I would rather go back to the sky to be a star than wait on you, a ruthless husband". Then the woman ascended into the sky with her son and calabash. And so, this Bunun could not have any millet grain to plant in his field.

This story explains the requirement for moral relations with sky beings and the possibility of relationships being cut off if the Bunun violate the moral agreements.

The prominence of morality between *dihanin* and humans and its implication with the social order can be shown in another well-known myth: Shooting the Sun, as recorded in Sayama's work (2008[1919]:200-201, as cited in Huang 1988:176-177).

In ancient times, there were two suns in the sky. Therefore, there was no distinction between day and night. One day, a mother went to the field with her baby. She put her baby in the field and used a broom to make a shadow to protect it from the sun. Since the shadow was not big enough, she added a raincoat to the broom. Then she put her baby under the shadow and went to work. After working for a while, she came back to check if the baby was asleep, but her baby was gone. Instead, there were many lizards in the place where the baby had been. She was terrified and went home immediately to tell her husband. Her husband was as astonished as his wife and said, "It must be the sun

that killed our baby, I must go to kill the sun”. First he went back to the place where his baby had been to plant an orange tree. After that, he set off to look for the sun.

After many years of travelling over the mountains and across the rivers, he finally reached the sun. He shot the eye of the sun. The sun was in great pain and asked the man to lend it his cloth to wipe its eye. The father was very angry, he said, “You are my enemy because you have killed my baby, how can I lend you my cloth?” The sun sighed and replied, “You still do not know you are wrong? As a matter of fact, the death of your baby was completely caused by yourself. Because of my beneficial acts, you can have a living. But, so far, you have never held any ritual to show your gratitude to me. Is it not your fault? That is why you will become monkeys, pigs, trees or grass. If you love offspring, you must go home as soon as possible and hold a ritual to show your gratitude to me. When you know how to express your gratitude, you can reproduce your offspring forever without interruption”.

Since the sun spoke so convincingly, the man was very ashamed. He knelt sincerely on the ground to show his deep regret. When he prepared to leave, the sun stopped him and said, “You have a long journey to go, eat these beads”. And so the sun handed him some wooden and glass beads. He was deeply touched and cried tears of joy. Then he gave his cloth to the sun and it became the moon with a dark shadow. After that, he said goodbye to the sun (moon) and travelled toward his settlement night and day without stopping.

When he arrived at his settlement, he found that the orange tree had borne much fruit. He stood thoughtfully in front of the orange tree for a while. Then he went home and assembled all the settlement members. He passed on the message of the sun (moon) to them and asked them to hold a ritual for the sun (moon). In the ritual, people killed some pigs and chickens to show their gratitude to the sun (moon). After that, the Bunun began

to hold the ritual every month. After performing the ritual, the man called his other son, asking him to open his hands under his bottom to receive something. Suddenly, many wooden and glass beads fell from the father's bottom. This news quickly spread all over the settlement and many people came to watch. The father gave these marvellous beads to the people for them to put on their necks as necklaces.

In this myth, it began with severe heat, which resulted in the transformation of the baby into lizards. The disaster, according to the dialogue between Moon (the shot sun) and the Bunun shooter was not attributed to the fault of sky beings but of the Bunun themselves who failed to practice rituals to express their appreciation to spirits. Subsequently, rituals were decreed by Moon to restore and keep the world in balance.

Early ethnographic research indicated that Bunun social life was structured by a series of calendrical rituals (Chiu 1964; Is-lituan 2009; Sayama 2008[1919]). The sacred or tabooed days among the Bunun numbered from seventy to one hundred and twenty or even one hundred and thirty days a year. Moon was perceived as one of the most significant sky beings as all rituals were derived from it. Thus almost all rituals were aligned with the lunar calendar. Rituals carried the mandate of Moon. To keep track of these important rituals, the Bunun of the central mountains carved a wooden moon calendar with pictorial representations of specific rituals (Martin 2006:71-72).

The Bunun rituals, since their inception, were explicitly designed to sustain the cosmological order and to maintain balance between the spiritual world and the living. Rituals thus became the crucial mechanism as they were prescribed by Moon as the covenant (*sinpatumantuk*) between the Bunun and Moon. Failure in performing rituals would displease Moon or spiritual beings and result in accidents or misfortunes. The world and social order could be properly restored or maintained by practicing rituals

regularly. In short, the Bunun ancestral rituals were aimed at securing the balance under which human's present welfare could be achieved.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, my major purpose is not to extract a single, completely consistent view of tradition supposedly shared by all the Bunun people (*cf.* Chiu 1964, 1968; Hsu 1987; Is-lituan 2009; Palalavi 2006), but rather to show how the Bunun constructed their views of the social lives out of a range of concepts existing before the arrival of Christianity.

Like many societies in the world, the Bunun did not distinguish 'religion' from the rest of social life. Bowen has suggested, 'The idea of a separate religious sphere is recent, even in Western history' (2008:3). The Bunun 'religious' practices and beliefs were in fact not a discrete body of life or behaviour. In pre-Christian Bunun social life, religious, economic or political categories of behaviour were not clearly separated. If religion is the 'ideas and practices that postulate reality beyond that which is immediately available to the senses' (Bowen 2008:4), the pervasive existence of spirits was a significant part of the pre-Christian Bunun social life which permeated nearly every social aspect. For instance, the unequal presentation of pork would have repercussions in the spiritual sphere, resulting in hunting failures, poor harvests, sickness or even death among the associated groups. As Chiu observes, 'in their everyday lives, pregnancy and reproduction, a range of activities concerning a person's growth from childhood to adulthood, to death and funerals, there is no domain of social life among the Bunun without the engagement of religious or magic elements' (1964:73).

Second, I argue that the key principle of Bunun pre-Christian social life is the maintenance and restoration of balance between humans and the spirits. Rituals were decreed by Moon to keep the living in balance. To perform them was to follow the stipulations of their ancestors and thus would bring practical well-being and prosperity. Not to perform them was to break the covenant made between Moon and their ancestors and to challenge their authority, which would bring adversity. In general, the balance between humans and the spirits makes the world run smoothly. However, imbalance causes bad things to happen. The main task of religious practitioners, including ritual leaders and the spirit mediums, was to maintain or restore the spiritual balance.

In addition, in pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices it is clear that the distinction between *masial* (good) and *makaung* (bad) was prominent. This portrays the distinction between social and anti-social behaviours, or between behaviour which recognises obligations to others and behaviour which is selfish. Anti-social behaviours bring conflict, poor harvests and hunting, or sickness. The main purpose of rituals was to restore the balance or avoid social disharmony among the Bunun.

This did not mean that the pre-Christian Bunun social life remained unchanged over the long historical process. The religious practices were modified to some extent in response to changing socio-economic situations. This is evident in Samaya's book (2008[1919]), in which numerous variations of pre-Christian ritual practices of different Bunun communities were recorded. Mabuchi's seminal paper (1952[1951]:188) on the social organisation of the Bunun provided us with a dynamic picture of the change of ritual groups and practitioners among the 'colonial Bunun' contrasted with the 'homeland Bunun'. I propose that the Bunun pre-Christian past, as well as the Christian present, cannot be properly perceived without considering the

contexts in which the key cultural principles were appropriated or adapted, and this was closely related to the stories or histories they chose to tell or not to tell.

## Chapter 2 Loss and Rediscovery

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*Bunun tuza*, or the true humans, is the phrase used by people who lived in the central, east, and southeast highlands of Taiwan to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups. Nowadays, although the Bunun are known as mountain-dwellers and highlight their intimacy with mountains, they trace their origin to the western plains of Taiwan (Huang 1988; Mabuchi 1952[1951]; Palalavi 2006; Yang 2001). Their oral histories, passed on across generations, tell them that they were the original owners of vast tracts of plain, as the pioneers who opened up new fields for cultivation, and possessed a written language. However, with the influx of Han population from China, they were driven into the highlands. From this historical narrative, researchers concluded that the Bunun were originally plains inhabitants who fled to the mountains under pressure from Han encroachment (Mabuchi 1984[1953]; Utsushikawa et al. 2011[1935]).

However, the Bunun do not agree with this conclusion. For them, the migration history symbolised not only the tensions and conflicts of the earlier contacts with Han Chinese but also their agency and autonomy. They contend that their ancestors moved to mountains actively, to maintain their autonomy. Yang has rightly observed that the frequent movement and expansion across craggy mountains exhibit several cultural values the Bunun much cherished, including bravery, mobility and autonomy (2001:33). As I learned more about Bunun history from those who lived in the settlements, I gradually discovered that the idea of loss and rediscovery, which is the main theme of the historical narratives, allows the Bunun to interpret or experience Christianity. The Bunun show a tendency of seeing the past as full of meaning that is a part of the present.

In this chapter, I argue that an examination of how the Bunun talk about their history helps illuminate their acceptance of Christianity after the Second World War. It does so by offering insight into how the Bunun conceive of themselves as ‘historical agents’ (Ohnuki-Tierney 2001:237) as well as how they think about power, the idea of loss and rediscovery, and the nature of balance as evidenced by the specific histories they choose to tell. These narratives show how the Bunun have seen themselves as less powerful, prompting them to take a range of actions to restore balance. Contacts with outside forces, including the Dutch, the Han migrants, and Japanese and Chinese colonial authorities, provide significant insights into their acceptance of Christianity as a means to regain autonomy and restore balance. While most of this chapter will address perspectives on the past held by the Bunun people, I begin by considering distinct readings of the Bunun’s past evident in the early church documents of the Bunun Christianisation. I argue that by stigmatising the Bunun past as ‘primitive’ and ‘ignorant’ the early missionaries worked to distance the Bunun from their own past and render Bunun history irrelevant. However, this ahistorical perspective forms a sharp contrast to Bunun views of themselves as historical subjects – a subjectivity that strongly encourages their acceptance of Christianity.

### **Erasing the Bunun Past**

The Presbyterian missionaries saw the bygone history of the Bunun as irrelevant to their mission work, except in so far as it embodied the counterexample. The organised evangelistic work among Taiwanese indigenous populations under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan were instituted by a Canadian missionary, Rev. James I. Dickson, soon after the end of the Second World War (Hu 1965, 1997[1984]). The first Presbyterian missionary, Wen-tsi Hu, was sent to eastern Taiwan to open up a mission field among the Bunun population in October 1947. Pastor Hu clearly envisioned the

Church as a civilising force and his aim was to improve the moral and economic life of the Bunun through Christianity. In Pastor Hu's autobiography published in 1984, thirty-seven years after his first mission work among the Bunun, his comments on the Bunun past were very negative.

In the spring of 1948, one evening I took Pastor McIlwain, a teacher of the Yushan Theological College and Seminary, to preach the gospel among the Bunun people of Lilungshan in Kuanshan. Pastor McIlwain told the Bunun people the story of God creating the sky and earth. He said: 'God created the sun and moon. They work in turn during the day and night. Thus we can work in the day and rest at night'.

Among the audience, there was an elder, who stood up immediately and rebuked him: 'What you said is not correct. The story of two suns passed down by our ancestors is true. Moon once descended from the sky to the mountains of central Taiwan and stipulated many prescriptions to our ancestors. When he came down, his bottom touched the earth and made two big puddles. The puddles become the Sun-moon Lake. These are the evidence. You propose that God created the moon. Do you have evidence?' (Hu 1997[1984]:159-160)

In Pastor Hu's memoir, he recorded that after the elder finished his words many people much appreciated his knowledge and bravery. They applauded him to demonstrate their support. However, Pastor Hu offered the following negative accounts of this: 'It can be seen that the story of Sun becomes Moon passed down by the Bunun ancestors can only make the modern people realise the low intellect and thought of the uncivilised people' (1997[1984]:159); and he continued, '[t]he stubborn superstitions of the Bunun have caused them to lose their mind and will destroy their entire lives' (*ibid*: 160).

The missionaries perceived those ancestral oral histories to be primitive, sinful and un-enlightened. Missionaries claimed that there was a sharp separation between the pre-Christian past and the Christian present. The Bunun were encouraged to turn their back on their ancestral past in order to enter a new life. The statement carried an assumption that the Bunun history has nothing to do with contemporary people. Clearly, this perspective relates to a long-standing theological tradition of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan devoted to demonstrating the sovereignty of God (Chapter 4). In short, the Presbyterian Church offered a very distinct perspective on Bunun history in that it rejected the Bunun tradition and emphasised the mission's role in engaging and modifying the world by means of Christianity, thereby making history irrelevant.

### **The Past as Part of the Present**

The Bunun people, especially those involved in the early evangelistic work, offered a very different perspective on their history. It was through understanding of their past that the Bunun people not only came to make sense of Christianity, but also became familiar with it.

I vividly remember the telling encounter that I had with Pastor Taupas Tanapima, the very first Bunun Presbyterian evangelist. On that day I was accompanied by the pastor of the Luntien Presbyterian Church, whose grandfather was Pastor Taupas Tanapima's cousin. We drove for half an hour from Luntien to the village where Pastor Taupas Tanapima lives. When we arrived, Pastor Taupas Tanapima was waiting for us. After I explained my interest in understanding why and how the Bunun came to Christianity after the Second World War, he told me two stories. The first story commenced by referring to their original homeland, or Lamungan, Mai-asang, on the

western plains of Taiwan, the starting point of almost all historical narratives I collected. Then he traced the historical episode of the arrival of Han migrants and explained the subsequent loss of lands.

My father told me the story that I am now telling you.

The western plains of Taiwan originally were our ancestors' living and hunting grounds in the ancient past. At that time, the Bunun population was more than three hundred thousand. The names of some western places, such as Tainan and Jiji were given originally by our ancestors. For instance, the name Tainan<sup>7</sup> comes from Bunun vernacular *taina*, which means female deer.

About four hundred years ago, Han people began to migrate from China to Taiwan in wave after wave. One day, a Han headman came to meet our *saspinad* (leader). He requested our ancestors to kindly allocate a patch of land for his people's living. Our leader responded to his request by saying: 'It would be fine to allocate land for your people to live. But the question is, how big an area of land do you need?' The Han headman replied: 'I just beg your kindness to give our people land the size of this deer hide'. Our leader was wondering how it could be possible that all those Han people needed was just a piece of land the size of a deer hide. Anyway, our leader approved the Han headman's request. To our surprise, the Han headman took out scissors and cut the deer hide into a long, thin strip, and used it to circle a large piece of land. This was why we lost a vast land in western plains.

We look down on the Han people and distrust them as they acquired our land by deceiving us. With the increase of their number, they began to invade our territory. From

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<sup>7</sup> Tainan was initially established by the Dutch East India Company as a ruling and trading base during the Dutch Era (1624-1662). After Dutch colony, Tainan was remained as the capital of Taiwan until 1887.

then on, we began to behead the Han people. We cut off the head of any Han people who dared to intrude into our territory.

The second story he told was about the loss of the written words. The Bunun believe their ancestors once had a written language, but it was washed away in a flood. They attributed their inferiority to Han Chinese to the loss of written words. In short, the Bunun connect written words with dignity, civilisation and power. The story goes:

In the ancient times, we, the Bunun people, had written words just like the Han Chinese. To preserve the written words safely, our ancestors inscribed these words upon a big stone. They thought this was a best way to preserve the written words from getting lost. Unfortunately, a large deluge came and rapidly submerged everything on earth. With the increasing rise of the water level, people climbed up to higher and higher mountains for survival. On their way to the mountains, a terrible torrent rushed down the mountain, submerged the stone and washed it away. Eventually, the stone disappeared and we became illiterate, inferior people compared to Han Chinese.

Historical accounts offered by Pastor Taupas Tanapima combined images of deceitful Han Chinese and sensational accounts of the loss of land as well as written words. When I commenced my research, I did not intend to systematically collect historical narratives. However, after meeting with Pastor Taupas Tanapima, I was fascinated by the histories he chose to tell in the light of their acceptance of Christianity. Pastor Taupas Tanapima's narratives are not alone, as in many of the accounts I collected the cause of Bunun acceptance of Christianity is connected closely with their ancient stories. I discovered these important themes that offered the Bunun insight into their contemporary situation. The experience encouraged me to collect

more oral narratives of villagers. The past, I found, is not devoid of content, but refreshingly full of meaning that illuminates the present.

## **History: the Experiential and Shared Path**

Generally speaking, history among the Bunun is a spoken affair. Except for a few references in Japanese or Chinese (Chiu 1966; Sayama 2008[1919]; Utsushikawa et al. 2011[1935]), before the 1970s written histories by the Bunun themselves in any language are virtually nonexistent. By far the most extensive Bunun history in Japanese, *The Formosan Native Tribes: a genealogical and classificatory study*, was compiled by three Japanese anthropologists, N. Utsushikawa, N. Miyamoto and T. Mabuchi, and published in 1935. In this work, the distribution and migration processes of the Bunun people were pieced together from the Bunun's oral histories. However, the academic writings of Bunun history had no relationship to the way Bunun saw their lives. Perhaps this is because from the Japanese perspective the Bunun history was seen as worthless compared to the colonists' history, or perhaps because books and reports were extremely difficult for the Bunun to access.

For the Bunun, history refers to a past of shared oral recollections passed down through generations. In the early period of my research, I always accompanied my surrogate mother to work in her little vegetable garden. She told me about many myths, historical events, or rituals in the past while we were working. I was extremely impressed by her knowledge of Bunun history and customs compared to other people in her generation. She explained:

We learn history by listening to the recollections of our elders. When I was young, I used to work with my father. Whenever we worked or rested, he took every opportunity to tell me the mythic stories, the events in the past, our family history, religious beliefs

and practices. He told me that what he narrated were *mamantuk*, or true, as some of them really occurred in the past according to elders and some of them were experienced by himself.

Now, I am telling you the Bunun stories. Like my father, what I've told, some of them are heard from elders, some of them are my own experiences.

In my surrogate mother's account, she described the way in which history is learned among the Bunun. History is a shared and experiential affair. In the Bunun language, the native terms *palihabasan* or *lainihaiban* are the closest to the word history (Huang 1999b; Palalavi 2006; Yeh 1995). The word *palihabasan* is composed of the noun root *habas* means the past, the prefix *pali-* indicates talking about something, and the suffix *-an* indicates a noun as the object of an action. According to Jeng and Yen's *Bunun Dictionary of the Bubukun subgroup* (2009), *palihabasan* can be used both as noun and verb. As a noun, it means legend; as a verb, it means to tell a story or talk about the past. The word *lainihaiban* is made up of the verb root *lahaib* which means to walk by or pass, the infix *-in-* which is a past form meaning something has been done in the past, and the suffix *-an* which turns the verb *lahaib* into a noun *lahaiban* meaning where one passes by, or road. In Jeng and Yen's *Bunun Dictionary*, the noun term *lainihaiban* means experience, biography or history. To distinguish the meanings of the two words, Palalavi proposed that word *palihabasan* focuses more on the action of 'speaking', while the word *lainihaiban* is related to the experienced path, passage, or route that is the 'content' of Bunun history (2006:25).

I argue that what makes the oral narrative prominent is its performance as a public speech act. In the process of speaking, people are able to share or exchange their acquired or experienced information. In Martin's paper on the historical recollections

of the Bunun of Taitung County, he pointed out that the oral narratives play an important and often underestimated role in cultural transmission. He said, ‘...for the Bunun...it [the oral narrative] is their tradition and way of passing on their story and life experiences’ (2011:140). In short, by examining the native terms *palihabasan* and *lainihaiban*, it shows personal experience can only become shared knowledge of the past when it has been told, accepted and passed down from generation to generation.

In addition the Bunun word *mamantuk* is crucial for understanding Bunun historical narratives. The word *mamantuk* is derived from the verb root *mantuk* meaning true or correct, and the prefix *ma-* meaning to emphasise that what has been spoken is absolutely true or honest. In some cases, I observed when someone finished his or her accounts about something that had occurred the audience might follow with the word *mamantuk* spoken in a rising intonation. This is intended to confirm that what has been said is true. The speaker would reply *mamantuk* with a falling intonation which indicates: ‘I promise what I said is true’. In general, *mamantuk* means that something is true because it is experienced as something that is right, or promises that something is right. That is, the experience rather than the logical explanation is what makes something convincing. This perception is confirmed in Yeh’s study (1995:30) on Bunun concepts of history when she asserts:

[The oral history] according to their perception was the ‘fact really occurred in the past’.

They said nothing regarding to the things that never happened.....because they perceived that the contents of oral narratives were real events that had occurred in the past.

Following the lead of the Bunun elders, I have divided Bunun history into three time periods: (1) the period up until the seventeenth century, which focuses on the contacts with the Dutch and Han Chinese; (2) the Japanese colonial regime from the

very early to the mid twentieth century in which war, rivalry, and domination were pervasive themes; (3) the early post-war Chinese domination during which the assimilation program was the main focus of struggle.

### **The Golden Age and its Losses**

Compared to the subsequent period of Japanese rule, the historical narratives of Bunun early contacts with Dutch and Han Chinese are less detailed. However, that does not mean they are trivial. Instead, the tenuous memories of this period offer the Bunun sufficient evidence that they had a golden age, and some explanation for its subsequent loss. A male elder recalled the story of interactions between the Bunun ancestors and the Dutch as follows:

Perhaps our ancestors met the Dutch when they still lived in Lamungan of the western plains of Taiwan. The Dutch bartered guns in exchange for mountain products. Our ancestors did not see them as enemies but friends.

The encounter between the Bunun and the Dutch was not limited to goods exchange only. I heard a male elder proclaim that his ancestor intermarried with the Dutch.

I heard from my late father that our ancestor had once married with a Dutch person in the bygone past. As a result, my family members are taller and have high noses. This is why my family is distinct.

The Dutch (through the administration of the Dutch East India Company) occupied southwest Taiwan between 1624 and 1662. They established an Asian base for triangular trade between the company, the Qing dynasty and Japan, with the hope of interrupting Portuguese and Spanish trading alliances. Although the Bunun strongly assert that their ancestors had contact and some kind of interaction with the Dutch,

these oral histories remain undocumented. However, in 2006, Bunun scholar Haisul Palalavi in his book, *Bunun: the Origin of Tribes and the History of Tribal Migration*, managed to uncover evidence of early contacts by re-examining the very early Dutch archives, *The Zeelandia Diaries*, recorded between 1629 and 1662. He suggested that some settlement names or group names in western Taiwan seem to be linked with the names of Bunun subgroups or family groups. He argues: 'it can be speculated that the Bunun people had intensive interactions with foreign ethnic groups within and beyond the Shuisalian region' (2006:145) in the seventeenth century. Although Palalavi's finding does not confirm whether the Bunun had direct contact with the Dutch, perhaps the most important aspect of such a statement is that the Bunun were active participants in western Taiwan in at least the seventeenth century.

In addition, both the male and female elders I interviewed contended that their ancestors had already heard the gospel or even become Christians. A male elder recounted:

Aside from bartering goods, the Dutch brought Christianity to our ancestors. Our ancestors heard the gospel and accepted it. This is due to the Dutch people.

In Taiwan history, the significant influences brought forth by Dutch are the introduction of literacy and the work of evangelism among plains indigenes. The Dutch missionaries made efforts to evangelise the plain indigenous population in southwest Taiwan and earned many converts. They established a school for indigenous boys and girls where the basic Christian doctrines were taught. Dutch missionaries learned the local vernacular, called Siraya language, to facilitate mission work, then created a romanized script (Hsinkang Writing), compiled a dictionary of the language, translated the Bible, and taught the natives how to write their own language. For the

Dutch, the aim of education and evangelism was to acculturate and convert indigenes. Despite the Dutch mission work among the Bunun being undocumented, the Bunun held that it is *mamantuk*, or true, as it was experienced by their ancestors.

Although these oral histories are scarce, perhaps the most important aspect of such accounts for the Bunun people is to describe a golden age when they were the original owners of the plains in western Taiwan, and had a written language as well as Christianity. However, the glorious past gradually faded away after the arrival of Han migrants. The Dutch recruited seasonal Han Chinese workers from mainland China to produce food crops soon after their occupation. By the end of the Dutch era, some Chinese migrants had become permanent residents and developed intensive wet rice cultivation. The Dutch were driven out of Taiwan by the Ming loyalist forces of Cheng Chengkung (Koxinga) in 1662, and he established a short-lived regime on Taiwan. The Chengs brought 70,000 soldiers from China to Taiwan, and to support these military forces large sections of land were cleared. The Cheng regime was defeated by the Qing Empire in 1683 and this era was characterised by increasing numbers of Han migrants. The Han population increased dramatically, from 100,000 in 1650 to 220,000 in 1680, approximately 840,000 in 1777, to 1.7 million in 1824 (Chen 1979; Shepherd 1993).

The increasing numbers of Han Chinese posed threats to the Bunun people. The rivalry between the Bunun and Han Chinese in Pastor Taupas Tanapima's account above was due to the Han Chinese using deceit to take the land from its rightful owners. Such historical narratives describe how the Han Chinese replaced the original inhabitants of the western plains in Taiwan through trickery. This is apparently a common oral history among the Bunun to explain the loss of land (see also Palalavi 2006; Sayama 2008[1919]).

## **Intensifying Political Struggles in the Early Japanese Period**

Although the Qing authorities found ways to make contact with the Bunun from the mid-nineteenth century, their interaction was minimal (Chen 1984; Yang 1988). Palalavi rightly proposed that the Bunun people did not come under Qing jurisdiction (2006:189). However, as described by Palalavi, the completely autonomous and independent tribal societies were encroached upon by the Japanese authorities (*ibid*).

The Japanese colonial regime occupied Taiwan in 1895, but the Bunun highlanders of eastern Taiwan, who were reputed to be notorious headhunters, escaped direct rule for a few more years. By 1909, three police outposts had been set up in the lower reaches of the Lakulaku River in eastern Taiwan. These were the very first colonial stations in eastern Bunun territory (Lin 2007:19). In order to extend Japanese control into the aboriginal regions, the Governor-General of Taiwan, Sakuma Samata, instituted the Five Year Program of Ruling Indigenes campaign (1910-1915). Subsequently, three new police outposts were constructed in the headwaters of the Lakulaku River at the end of 1911.

In the early colonial period, the Japanese were more interested in exploiting the lucrative natural resources (such as logging and camphor extraction) than in establishing systematic political control in Bunun territory. In 1913, the Japanese government approved several camphor extraction enterprises in the lower reaches of the Lakulaku River. From the Bunun perspective, the foreigners were invaders and headhunting was the inevitable means to proclaim their right to the territory. Relationships between the camphor extraction companies, the Japanese authorities and the Bunun further deteriorated, descending into conflict.

The struggles became entrenched as a result of the implementation of the rifle confiscation program. In Bisazu Nahaisulan's account of the Hasivanan Incident of 1915, as in many of the accounts I collected, the early retaliatory expeditions were attributed to rifle confiscation.

I am telling you the hard times our ancestors suffered. I heard this story from my father and I am telling you now.

One day, my father brought a group of senior and young villagers to the Japanese police outpost. They pretended to go there to help Japanese police to log timber and transport oil. It was probably lunch time when they arrived. A [Japanese] man came out and said to them that they did not have time as they were having lunch at that moment. Among the Bunun, there was an elder who spoke to the Japanese: 'You have to give me medicine. The man who was severely beaten by you is seriously injured'. At this, the Japanese returned inside to dispense the prescription. They waited and waited outside and finally lost their patience. They were angry and thought that it was impossible to take so long to prepare the medicine. They broke into the police post, killed that man first by machete, and then all the [Japanese] people in the house. They [the Bunun people] only had machetes and no guns, as their guns had been confiscated. My father ran very fast to the place where the guns were deposited. He exerted all his strength to kick the door, opened it and took all the guns out. The Japanese police were unable to fight back because they had no guns. This occurred in Hasivanan. If my father had not taken the guns out, the Bunun would have definitely been killed. Fortunately, my father had taken all the guns and ammunition. The police in Hasivanan were all killed.

The context in which the rivalry between the Bunun and Japanese occurred as described by Bisazu Nahaisulan was a complex one full of the idea of loss and

rediscovery. In 1914, after the brutal military conquests of the ‘Northern Savages’ (i.e. the Atayal and Truku peoples), the Japanese colonists turned to crack down on the ‘Southern Savages’ (i.e. the indigenous groups of southern Taiwan, including the Bunun) with radical suppression measures (Lin 2003). The rifle confiscation program instituted in 1915 forced the Bunun to give up their guns by half encouraging, half threatening them. The Bunun perceived the rifle as not only hunting equipment but also the symbol of manhood, the value of a man in the world. The Bunun saw the further penetration of Japanese forces as causing the loss of lands, guns, and most importantly autonomy. In mid May 1915, within one week, the Bunun of Hasivanan, Masisang, Tahun and Talunas staged retaliatory expeditions against Japanese authorities. The headhunting raids were always considered the means to bring back what they had lost and restore the balance with foreigners.

I collected a *malastapang* song recorded by a male elder, Tahai Binkinuan, who was born in the 1920s. He developed an interest in collecting ancestral songs and became an instructor of traditional songs for children in the late 1980s. One day, he shared a *malastapang* song with me. *Malastapang* is the ‘Bunun announcement song’ (Martin 2006:75) or roughly translated as the ‘Report of Heroic Deeds’ in Chinese. According to Tahai Binkinuan, *malastapang* was performed after successful headhunting raids, or during significant ceremonies, such as marriage, the planting ritual, the harvest ritual, or *Manahtangia* (the Shooting the Ear ritual). The male participants squat on the earth, a host passes a cup of wine to one person and requests him to announce his special exploit. The speaker has to drink it down immediately and begins to recount his exploit soon after the host finishes his inquiries. All other participants follow his lead. Although *malastapang* is performed only by men, the women and children are not excluded. Women always stand behind their husbands.

When the man announces each sentence, other male participants and women repeat his words loudly. Women clap their hands and jump to express their appreciation.

In short, the practice of *malastapang* offers a mechanism in which personal experience, *lainihaiban*, can turn into a shared understanding of the past, *palihabasan*, or history. According to Tahai Binkinuan, the song below was performed by his late father in describing the fighting with the Japanese. In order to instruct the children, this song is written in Bunun romanised script, together with the Chinese translation. My English translation is based on the Chinese text.

<i>hoo....ho. ho</i>	開始報告	start to report
<i>istahoav</i>	你報告一下	You start to report.
<i>inisavan</i>	跟敵人作戰	Fighting against enemy
<i>masahabasag</i>	有關於過去砍頭的事	the headhunting in the past
<i>ho...ho...</i>	報告一下	Start to report
.....		
<i>tomananu</i>	我開始報告	I start to report
<i>inkatagos</i>	我第一次	My first time
<i>daoka lipug</i>	這個日本人	The Japanese
<i>silala</i>	壓迫我們	Oppress us
<i>namahalav</i>	搶奪我們所有的東西	Plunder everything we have
<i>daoki bosol</i>	搶奪我們的槍	Rob us of our guns
<i>na-ansaso</i>	且搶我們的小姐	and take our women by force
<i>ma-anak</i>	甚至打死我們(沒有罪)的人	Even beat our [innocent] people to death
<i>mapinsahto</i>	把頭目、漂亮小姐的先生綁起來打得全身都是血	binding and beating the leader and the women's husbands. Their bodies covered with blood.
<i>mal-kabunun</i>	如此對待布農族	Treating the Bunun like this
<i>tanamdao</i>	我們試著要反抗	We attempt to revolt
<i>bunun toza</i>	我們布農族原住民	We the Bunun people

<i>palis-ampok</i>	全部一起開會	Holding a meeting together
<i>sah-laz bunun</i>	日本人殺我們布農族	The Japanese kill us
<i>pimopaoncia</i>	(日本人對我們如此)我們該怎麼辦	(the Japanese treat us like this) what should we do?
<i>toza toza</i>	我們真的要反抗	We determine to fight back.
<i>macin saso</i>	全部一起攻擊	To attack together
<i>lanalumah</i>	侵襲到日本人的家裡	Assaulting the Japanese houses
<i>lumah lipug</i>	侵襲到日本人的家裡	Assaulting the Japanese houses
<i>macimaglav</i>	我們用刀砍他們的頭 (他們用武士刀,我們用我們的刀)	We cut their heads with machetes (They used Japanese swords and we used ours)
<i>mapatabal</i>	用刀互砍	attacking each other with machetes
<i>masan kalvag</i>	家裡家外都是屍體	inside and outside the house were covered with dead bodies
<i>naian lumah</i>	家所在的地方都是屍體	The house was full of dead bodies
<i>paicistoban</i>	全部屍體都被砍了頭	All the bodies had been beheaded
<i>pisaso nai</i>	攻擊日本人的房子	Attacking the Japanese houses
<i>lumah lipug</i>	燒日本人的房子	Burning the Japanese houses
<i>mapistaba</i>	燒日本人的房子	Burning the Japanese houses
<i>mah-namaopin</i>	以牙還牙	A tooth for a tooth
<i>silala hai</i>	你先壓迫我們	You oppress us first
<i>pimopao nin</i>	現在讓你看我們的厲害	Let you see our power
<i>taigka naiyan</i>	介紹自己母親的姓氏	(announce the name of the speaker's mother's family group)
<i>Palalavi</i>	Palalavi	Palalavi
<i>hoo...ho.ho</i>	講完了	That's all.
<i>hoo...ho.ho</i>	講完了(表示再次強調)	That's all. (to emphasise again)

In this historical narrative and song, the Bunun were forced to take action when the Japanese invaded their territory, confiscated guns, abducted women and posed a great threat to their survival. This is a common narrative trope in eastern Bunun region to explain the power relationships between the Bunun and the Japanese.

The 'unstable circumstances' along the Lakulaku River prompted the Japanese to take alternate measures. Logging and camphor extraction activities were suspended, and all police posts within the restricted area were evacuated. In November 1915, electrified fences running north to south along the east border of Bunun territory were constructed, aimed at enclosing the Bunun in the mountains and cutting off their exchange relations with the lowlanders. Furthermore, armed guard stations and personnel were deployed along the length of the electrified fences (Lin 2007:20). Bunun who once roamed through mountains now found they were forced into bounded areas enclosed with electrified wires.

Moreover, in order to dominate the Bunun more efficiently, the Japanese constructed the Patungkaun Cross-Island Police Cordon Trail, begun in May 1919 and finished in January 1921. The trail goes through most of the Bunun settlements along the Lakulaku River, with extension paths constructed to connect different Bunun settlements with the main trail. Police posts were then re-deployed in this region for better self-protection and more effective domination of the Bunun, but the armed resistance staged by the Bunun never ended. The Japanese authorities responded to these revolts with larger, bloodier, and more extensive retaliation. The number of police posts was increased to forty, reaching their maximum along the Lakulaku River in 1923. This was the most intensive police deployment in Taiwan at that time (Lin 2007:22).

The transformation of the pattern of violent confrontation between the Bunun and the foreign colonists is particularly noteworthy. In the past, *makavas* (headhunting) was a pivotal strategy for establishing new social order with other peoples especially in the pioneer territory. By practicing headhunting, the Bunun asserted their right to the territory and their autonomy. In the early phase of armed struggles, small scale

headhunting raids were undertaken against Japanese. The heads of *pais* (enemy) were cut off, brought back and the appropriate rituals held. Nevertheless, after the 1910s, the word *pasanpanah* (warfare) was created to describe larger and more intense martial confrontations with numerous casualties (Palalavi 2006:191). In some cases, Bunun of different settlements joined together to conduct assaults. Whether the attacks were successful or not, the Bunun attackers abandoned their houses and moved across the county border with their entire families. In short, mobility was still a way to maintain their autonomy.

### **‘The Bunun are as Ignorant and Wild as Barbarians’**

The rivalry between the Bunun and Japanese is a common theme in historical narratives among the Bunun that I collected. Compared to previous academics’ research whose focus was mainly on the military conflicts (Lin 2007; Palalavi 2006), I argue that even more significant are the reports of Japanese treatment of the Bunun people. Bisazu Nahaisulan recounted:

I remember when I was young I always heard Japanese police call us barbarians. We were barbarians, as we were illiterate, ignorant and brutal. As a result, they thought we could be civilised in terms of the Japanese domination.

In Bisazu Nahaisulan’s account, the Japanese authorities’ statements illustrated an overbearing pride and a sense of superiority that was an affront to the Bunun. Subsequent pacification programs were implemented, aimed at transforming the Bunun’s nature. Implementation of the pacification program turned out to be a transitional period between types of colonialism among the eastern Bunun. However, the Bunun perceived the Japanese regime’s pacification project as dangerous or lethal,

as it consolidated the unbalanced power relationships between the Bunun and the Japanese with the Bunun positioned on the less powerful side.

Bunun insurrections against Japanese authorities along the Lakulaku River nearly came to an end in the 1930s due to the colonists' bloody subjugation and retaliations. In fact, prior to this, the number and scale of military uprisings were dwindling due to implementation of the pacification policy during the 1920s. The Japanese authorities began to establish local medical facilities and indigenous primary schools, and to introduce new crops and livestock among the Bunun of the Lakulaku River. Of these, the institution of indigenous primary schools was important as it aimed to guide the young Bunun away from parental supervision. The first indigenous primary school in the region was opened in 1922 (Lin 2007:25).

The Japanese colonists applied the *i Fan tsi Fan* policy, literally 'to recruit the savages to govern the savages'. The Japanese managed to befriend and establish a leader in each settlement and then used that leader to persuade the other Bunun to accept official injunctions. Bunun youngsters who were fluent in Japanese and familiar with Japanese culture became the intermediaries between local communities and the Japanese. Outstanding indigenous primary school graduates were recruited as members of the Youth Club, appointed as the heads of the Youth Club, or recruited as *aiung* or workmates to serve in local police posts. The officially recognised village leaders and the heads of the Youth Club were authorised to implement official commands. They were considered as surrogates of Japanese officials. In some settlements, Japanese-appointed leaders surpassed the customary leaders (*saspinad*) in power. In short, the Japanese attempted to create a new power hierarchy in Bunun society, a new group of leaders replaced the original leaders, and became the representatives of the Japanese authorities.

I heard many elders, at times in only a sentence or two, recollecting how cruel these ‘fake Japanese’ were. A female elder, who was born in 1940, told me a story of her mother’s family. In the story below, the accusation was made against Dahu, who was the head of the Youth Club and heavily relied on by the Japanese police.

I can never forgive Dahu, for what he did to my mother’s family.

When our ancestors still lived in the mountains, one day a Japanese teacher disappeared. The Japanese police asked Dahu to ferret out the truth. Without detailed investigation, Dahu told the police that the Japanese teacher was killed by my grandfather and my grandfather’s father. In fact, the Japanese teacher could not stand the loneliness in the mountains and had decided to go to the town in the lowland. Nevertheless, my grandfather and his father were immediately captured by the Japanese police and tortured. Their hands were bound tightly with rope and they were hung high in the air. Below them was a bonfire, and they were baked like animals. When they were nearly dead, they were lowered, doused with cold water, then hung up and baked again several times until death. My grandmother was pregnant at that time. For fear of becoming involved in the event, she ran back to her natal family. She returned to her husband’s house when the situation calmed down, but was surprised to discover that no one was there. She could do nothing but marry another person.

The cruel treatment of the Japanese rulers is a common theme in historical narratives among the Bunun of eastern Taiwan. These stories provide a form of moral charge against outside authorities. Both young and old people offer moral commentaries about the treatment of Bunun that reflect the view that Bunun were considered not as humans, but as animals, by the Japanese.

## **The Bunun Diaspora in a New Socio-political Arena**

The dehumanising nature of Japanese domination was also related to the institution of the mass resettlement program. The Bunun situated in the remote mountain regions remained a potential threat to Japanese authorities, which prompted them to conduct mass resettlement programs to relocate the indigenous peoples of the remote mountain areas to the lowlands, so as to be closer to colonial control. Palalavi (2006:196-197) points out that the reason for the Mass Resettlement Policy was a mixture of political, economic and cultural considerations. The objectives of political domination, exploitation of natural resources and cultural assimilation prompted the Japanese to take aggressive action. The Japanese authorities conducted several small scale pilot resettlement programs among Taiwan indigenous communities early in 1919. To acquire the necessary information for the preparation of large scale resettlement programs, the Department of Savage Ruling of the Bureau of Police Affairs launched an island-wide survey on the indigenous settlements in 1931.

The first pilot resettlement program among Bunun was carried out in 1922, in Kuokeng, a settlement in central Taiwan (Lin 1998:80). In the early 1930s, the Japanese prepared to relocate the Bunun of the Lakulaku River to the lowlands. The project was, without a doubt, opposed strongly by the Bunun. To eradicate, or at least to weaken, the counterforces, the Japanese plotted a massacre. The massacre story is known by almost everyone in Bunun communities, even if that knowledge consists of only one or two sentences. A female elder, Valis Is-tanda, who was born in the early 1940s, told me the story as follows:

I am telling you the story I heard from my mother of what happened to my grandfather.

During the Japanese period, when the Bunun still lived in the mountains, one day, the

Japanese police invited them to Taklu. Taklu is situated in the lower reaches of the Lakulaku River, very close to the lowland. They [the Japanese police] said that they prepared many goods, including cloth, costumes, and oil. These stuffs would be dispensed to anyone who came to Taklu. On the appointed day, about one hundred Bunun males from a variety of settlements showed up. When they arrived, they saw food and wine had been set on the table. The Japanese police welcomed them to eat and drink. When they were nearly drunk, the Bunun people were led to a chamber beneath the ground. There was nothing the Bunun could do but be buried alive in the ground. Out of all those who died, the only ones left alive were some lucky guys, including my grandfather, who ran off and fled for home immediately. So the news spread widely.

Although there were many different versions, stories about the Taklu massacre merged together to form a narrative of oppression. The world in which the massacre occurred, as described by Valis Is-tanda, was one with a profoundly unbalanced power relationship. At that time, the Bunun found themselves unable to directly challenge existing power relationships with the Japanese.

Many elders mentioned the Taklu massacre as an elaborate trick used to punish recalcitrant Bunun. They overwhelmingly emphasise the dehumanisation of Bunun and their treatment as animals. Consequently, the Bunun of the Lakulaku River had no choice but to follow the Japanese injunction to be relocated in the lowlands. The new settlement layout and domiciles were planned by the Japanese but the actual locations were negotiated with the Bunun leaders or representatives. According to official documents, twelve Bunun settlements, 299 households, and 2,080 people were resettled between April 1933 and January 1935. The second wave of resettlement was smaller in scale: 9 households and 120 residents of Rekune were relocated to Rupusan in April 1938 (Tamazato District Office 1939:53).



Figure 4 The Opening Ceremony of Hsiuluan Meeting Hall, October 19, 1935  
(courtesy of Ibu Takis-dahuan)

The process of resettlement is a miserable memory for the Bunun (see also in Martin 2011:136-138). They had to give up many important things they cherished. They were forced to withdraw from their own houses and lands to be relocated in the new places. This implies that Bunun mobility and autonomy had been greatly weakened. The forced migration also damaged Bunun family structure. Out of fear of potential rebellion, large families were divided and relocated to different places. In short, the Bunun lost their lands, houses, and even their families.

As a part of the assimilation policy, the construction of the new settlement gave the Japanese government the opportunity to reshape Bunun social life and customs, and place them under its complete domination. Traditional political structures were replaced by a colonial military force and officially recognised leaders. Police stations were widely established as the administrative, educational and trading centres in the

resettlement areas. Bunun children were obliged to attend indigenous primary school to learn Japanese and develop a patriotic attitude toward Japan. According to an official census, in 1938 five indigenous primary schools were set up in resettled Bunun areas (Table 1). The high rate of attendance and enrolment shows the Bunun were under the complete domination of the Japanese after resettlement.

**Table 2 Indigenous Children's Education among the Bunun of Yuli Prefecture, 1938**

Name of Indigenous Primary School	Name of Police Post	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Attendance	Percentage of Enrolment
Rupusan	Rupusan	53	91.11%	85.63%
Taiping	Taiping	56	95.55%	85.45%
Panitaz	Panitaz	88	99.15%	93.52%
Chingshui	Chingshui	99	94.78%	81.65%
Luntien	Luntien	115	98.23%	94.73%

Source: Tamazato District Office (1939)

The resettled Bunun suffered severely from a variety of diseases, the most fatal being malaria and diarrhoea. This was evident in the high rates of child mortality and name changing. According to my genealogical investigations, one third of children born between the late 1930s and the 1950s died prematurely; and over half of the survivors had their names changed at least once. Name-changing (*pacislushuan*) was a part of healing practice performed by spirit mediums in time of sickness. The Bunun perceived that name-changing would stop the malevolent spirits that attempted to steal the child's life (Fang 2012:138). This frequently occurred during one's childhood. The high rate of name-shifting implies children were the victims of diseases occasioned by the mass resettlement program.

The mass resettlement program also had a great impact on Bunun culture and religious life, depriving them of their connection with spirits and ancestors. The practice of in-house burial was prohibited in the interests of hygiene, and a public cemetery established. The deceased no longer cohabited with the living (Chapter 5). The practice of Bunun ancestral rituals was discouraged, and the spirit mediums were suppressed.

The Japanese colonialists were intervening actively in Bunun ancestral religious beliefs and practices by the end of the 1930s. In the early 1940s, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan described how Shintoism was introduced in his village:

When I was about seventeen or eighteen years old, one day the Japanese police assembled all villagers in the square. They persuaded us to abandon ancestral rituals, and instead worship the Japanese Emperor and gods (*kamisama*). They announced that the Bunun ancestral religion was not religion, but full of childish, ignorant and backward thinking. Such a derogatory view of our religion was supported by some Bunun youngsters who associated with the Japanese closely. They saw ancestral religious practices as backward, primitive, and uncivilised as well.

Subsequently, the Japanese police distributed a Shinto altar to every house. They commanded us to set it up inside the house and to practice Shinto worship every morning and evening. They said that by doing so we would be blessed and protected by the gods. On New Year's Day, all of us were requested to attend the ceremony in the nearby Shinto Shrine and pay our respect to the gods. I remember, as the tension in the Pacific War increased, all students were brought to the nearby Shinto Shrine every Monday morning to pray for the success of Japanese troops.

A female elder, Pula Tanapima, who was born in the 1920s, recounted how towards the end of the Japanese period they were guided to worship the sun by police in Hsiuluan:

All residents, except for those who could not walk, such as the elderly or disabled persons, were made to congregate in the square in front of the meeting hall by the Japanese police every Sunday morning. We lined up and faced the direction of the sunrise. We bowed to the sun at a ninety degree angle. We thus learnt that the sun was the Japanese god at that time.

Pastor Talima Nahaisulan and Pula Tanapima's accounts show that when the Japanese introduced Shintoism, they could only do so by using their authority, but even so the Bunun people were never more than superficially connected with it.

In Hsiuluan, many elders recounted that only the ritual of *Manahtangia* (the Shooting the Ear ritual) was permitted, as it was misunderstood as an annual harvest festival rather than a religious ritual by Japanese police. Nevertheless, some Bunun people continued performing ancestral rituals secretly in faraway mountain fields to make sure the crops would yield a good harvest. A story widely told among the eastern Bunun communities recount:

Once upon a time, a man was discovered performing ancestral rites in the remote place. He was punished severely. The Japanese police also destroyed the ritual place in order to root out the Bunun superstitions. This place however was considered to be a place with a serious taboo. Anyone who offended it would be punished by vengeful spirits. After that, the Japanese police gradually became insane and finally committed suicide.

This story concluded that the suicide was the result of Japanese police's offending the indigenous spirits. The spiritual power wanted revenge for the destruction of rites that

had resulted in the imbalance in human and spiritual order. The indigenous spirits, or the ancestors, or both, were displeased with the Japanese colonists.

## **Post-war Losses**

Rather than improving, Bunun saw their life further deteriorate under the domination of the Chinese Nationalist Party, which assumed control of Taiwan in 1945. Although the Japanese had left their positions and were already repatriated, the Chinese Nationalist government had not yet properly taken up their duties. The Chinese Nationalist regime was in fact exhausted after the Second World War, and was fighting the Chinese Communist Party at the time. Taupas Tanapima, who was born in the 1930s, described the beginnings of Chinese domination as below:

Our primary school had been shut down when the Japanese surrendered. One day I played with my mates at school. We saw a group of Chinese soldiers enter our school. These soldiers wore ragged khaki uniforms and straw sandals. They looked exhausted and moved with no order. They chopped the school desk and chair for cooking and stole vegetables from the gardens and the poultry near Bunun houses. Compared to the Japanese soldiers who had been well clothed at repatriation, these newcomers came wear ragged clothes and straw sandals.

Taupas Tanapima saw the initial period of the Nationalist rule as a time of extreme chaos and disorder. Moreover, soon after assuming control, the Chinese Nationalist Party instituted a series of assimilation policies aimed at transforming the non-Han Chinese into Chinese. In January 1946, the government renamed the Japanese indigenous primary schools as national primary schools in which Mandarin, Chinese history, and citizenship were taught. Changing the indigenous identity was also an essential part of the assimilation program. In 1947, the Bunun names were replaced

with Chinese names. According to Tu's research (2004:80-81), Chinese names were given arbitrarily and rapidly by local Chinese officers, regardless of Bunun culture. The introduction of Chinese names was aimed to develop a sense of national identity and belonging.

In addition the Bunun suffered from a series of natural disasters soon after the war. In 1945, Hsiuluan was nearly destroyed by a devastating mudslide, followed by a super typhoon. In 1949, another super typhoon hit eastern Taiwan, which ruined the Bunun settlements along the Taiping River. After these catastrophes, the Bunun survivors had to struggle for rehabilitation on their own, as there was insufficient official assistance, the Bunun recall. Disease outbreaks followed, the most serious being malaria and respiratory illnesses such as influenza, bronchitis and pneumonia. There were also many cases of gastroenteritis and gastric ulcers, according to an official survey published in 1948 (Ho and Yang eds. 2011:174).

## **Save My People: Christianity and Rediscovery**

At roughly the same time, the Bunun began to experience intensive mission work by the True Jesus Church (TJC)<sup>8</sup> and the Presbyterian Church.

### *The True Jesus Church*

The short-lived history of the TJC among the Bunun of eastern Taiwan can only be reconstructed with difficulty, as the missionaries involved did not write anything down,

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<sup>8</sup> The True Jesus Church (TJC) is a non-denominational church that originated in Peking, China, in 1917. Unlike many Christian denominations in China that were founded initially by Western missionaries, the TJC was established by Chinese and developed locally and independently. In 1937, the TJC contacted a Truku man of eastern Taiwan and set him up as the first TJC indigenous adherent in following year (Chang 2009). After this, the TJC spread throughout the Truku settlements of eastern Taiwan.

and the recollections of the Bunun elders are often the only sources available.

According to the elders' accounts, the mission work of the TJC was initiated by a Truku man named Okuyama. He was a medical assistant trained in malaria prevention and worked in the medical post. He gathered high school and primary school students in his office, and told Bible stories in Japanese, such as that God created the heaven and earth, and the Noah's Ark story.

The main message Okuyama preached was that the church is Noah's Ark and also the body of Jesus Christ and those who believe in Jesus will enter the Ark and receive protection, while others would die. According to elders' accounts, Okuyama sometimes spoke nonsense while praying and that was perceived as the consequence of the possession of Christian spirit, or the Holy Spirit in his words. Okuyama's eloquence and charismatic leadership earned him a small number of followers, most of whom were youngsters. According to church documents, he gained about twenty followers in Chunghsing settlement (Church History Committee of the Bunun Presbyteries 2008:43).

Nevertheless, the Pentecostal Christianity brought by Okuyama was rejected by the Bunun majority. People felt uneasy with spiritual possession, which was at odds with Bunun tradition. With the departure of Okuyama and local Bunun leaders, the TJC disappeared completely within the eastern Bunun community (*ibid.*), with most of the former TJC followers joining the Presbyterian community. Although it was short-lived, delivery of the Christian message through Bible storytelling by TJC became widespread, especially among the Bunun of northern Chohsi Township.

## *The Presbyterian Church*

Soon after the war, the Han Taiwanese Presbyterian churches began to conduct mission work in Bunun communities in 1946. They failed to make substantial headway as most Bunun thought Christianity offended their ancestral religious beliefs and practices. Only a small number of youngsters became affiliated with it. In the following recollection, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan showed the humiliation he suffered as an early Christian believer, and explained the reason for his acceptance of Christianity.

After the defeat of Japanese, I understood that the Japanese Emperor is not a god and that there should be another god. The gospel entered at roughly the same time. There were about thirty Christian believers in Chungping at that time. All of them were young.

One day, at a village assembly, the village head requested that whoever had attended a Christian congregation step forward and stand in front of the villagers. He announced that we were bringing American religion into our village and that he could not stand it and would exert all his efforts to prevent it from happening. He strongly warned us not to attend Christian meetings again.

When I went back home, my father interrogated me: 'Why do you come to Christianity and turn your back on our ancestors?' and 'You are an obedient son, aren't you? Why do you become disobedient?' I replied to my father: 'I am not becoming a disobedient son; instead, [I turn to Christianity] I want to do good for you'.

In the past, many parents opposed their children accepting Christianity. They protested that it would make children disobey their parents and forget our ancestors. Thus, they told us not to believe in western religion. At that time, the elders perceived that

Christianity is not our true *dihanin* (sky). It [Christianity] will paralyse and weaken our hearts like opium.

I explained to villagers that the Japanese Emperor was not our *dihanin* because he had been defeated. The true *dihanin* will win, not lose. Their god had returned to Japan when Japan lost. It had abandoned us. But the true *dihanin* will not leave us and is always with us.

Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's account shows that Bunun decisions to reject or accept Christianity were based on their cultural background. Shintoism was perceived as a political religion and had nothing to do with Bunun culture. Christianity however was evaluated in terms of their culture. The Bunun village head and elders saw Christianity as a foreign religion and feared that youngsters not following ancestral rituals would engulf the whole village in adversity. The Christian youngsters, like Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, also attempted to persuade their elders of the parallels between Christianity and Bunun ancestral religious beliefs and practices.

Although mission work among the Bunun met with bitter resistance at the beginning, the breakthrough came fairly quickly. Early in his mission work, Pastor Hu recognised the need for Bunun participation by recruiting and training Bunun evangelists (Hu 1965; 1997[1984]). He initiated the first Bible Training session between January 29 and February 4, 1949 in the Yuli Presbyterian Church of Hualien County. Pastor Hu successfully earned the support of Rueng-zueng Kao, who was a Bunun and the Mayor of Chohsi Township. In Pastor Hu's description, he wrote, 'All participants came from different villages of the Chohsi Township. This is because the Mayor of Chohsi Township, Rueng-zueng Kao, agreed to support us, as he had a favourable impression of Christianity and heard the missionaries were going to teach

Bunun scripts' (1965:407). Twelve Bunun people attended: four women and eight men. The training faculty was composed of Han Taiwanese missionaries and a church elder. Bible stories, Christian doctrines, the texts in romanised Bunun, Japanese hymns and inspirational songs were taught.

Many trainees were reluctant to attend but ultimately participated because they regarded Pastor Hu as a government representative whom they needed to treat with caution or risk military retaliation. However, almost overnight, the trainees became thoroughly engaged in Christianity. Most of the trainees began to be involved in mission work spontaneously after the first training session, and became pioneers in bringing Christianity to their people. They returned home and emerged as disseminators of the new religious knowledge and the accompanying literacy. Christianity continued to spread, in Pastor Taupas Tanapima's words, 'from relative to relative, from friend to friend, and from house to house'.

What did the Bunun trainees see in Christianity that prompted them to affiliate with it? Pastor Taupas Tanapima, who is one of the very last surviving people to have attended the original training session, told me he was very surprised to see many similarities between the biblical stories and their ancestral oral myths, such as the Deluge, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Bunun written words also impressed him very much. He contended that the oral story of the loss of the written words passed down by their ancestors is *mamantuk*, or true. The Bunun did indeed have written words, and Christianity brought them back. He told me the following with pride:

The Japanese or Han Chinese always despised us and treated us as barbarians or ignorant people as we did not have written words. They are wrong and our ancestors are right. Now that we have rediscovered our written words, we are equal to them.

The rediscovery of the written words, on the other hand, further stimulated the complex historical Bunun experience of loss. Pastor Taupas Tanapima recounted:

On the last day of the Yuli Bible training session, a lecturer told us: ‘Nowadays, the Bunun people are facing an even more critical moment than before. If you do not manage to save your people, the Bunun people will become extinct. I am telling you truly that only the Christian faith can save you and your people from extinction’. And the lecturer quoted verses from New Testament that said: These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, ‘Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matthew 10:5-6). He admonished us to save our people, like Jesus’ twelve disciples had done.

The words ‘save your people from extinction’, from the Han Taiwanese missionary struck heavily on participants’ hearts. The words were soon linked with the Bunun’s contemporary and historical situation as the subject of the colonial authorities. The Japanese and Chinese Nationalist governments had dominated the Bunun and installed highly centralised political and cultural policies to create a strong sense of Japanese or Chinese identity at the expense of Bunun identity, which was associated with rituals, language and culture. According to Pastor Taupas Tanapima, the loss of lands, population, ancestral customs, and autonomy prompted him to ask,

After the Japanese surrender, I began to speculate on the causes of a series of calamities, including famine, poverty, diseases, military conquests, and a high rate of mortality,

which the Bunun had suffered for a long time. I heard from my father that we, the Bunun people, had more than three hundred thousand people four hundred years ago. But we had merely around thirty thousand or forty thousand people by the end of the war. I asked myself why it happened.

Perhaps this is because we have lost many ancestral religious practices, I thought. For this, I attempted to worship Han deities, but that did not work either. I lost three family members. After the Yuli Bible training session, I came to Christianity to see if it could restore what we had lost in the past.

Their turn to Christianity was a strong statement about restoring their original status as *Bunun tuza*, or the true humans, the people who live in their own lands under their own customs. This was evident in Pastor Taliban Tansikian's statement, as recorded in Pastor Hu's writing, '[a]t the beginning, he [Taliban Tansikian] attended the training session out of curiosity when he heard that the missionaries were going to teach the Bunun scripts. Now, he believed that what the Bunun needed was not only their own scripts, but also that the Christian gospel was in fact indispensable' (1965: 408). In short, the Bunun's historical narratives of loss allowed them to interpret or experience Christianity. They perceive Christianity as something that could bring them back to the golden age in which all these things which were lost could be rediscovered.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, instead of seeing Bunun history as merely the objective documentation of what precedes the present, I investigate how the Bunun talk about their history and what specific histories they choose to tell. I argue that history plays an important and often underestimated role in the emergence of Christianisation. The historical narratives offered by Bunun elders suggest that they are not only an indispensable part

of the present, but also important ways of thinking about Christianity. Such statements contrasted sharply with the way foreign missionaries ignored history in their accounts. In fact their ahistorical perspectives were based on the Presbyterian theological premise that the Bunun's pre-Christian existence was ignorant and backward, and had nothing to do with their acceptance of Christianity and should therefore be abandoned completely.

For the Bunun, history is located in stories as ideas that the past has condensed and offered to the living. I suggest, by examining the historical narratives I collected, that the idea of loss and rediscovery is a common theme in all historical recollections. It is used not only to convey historical 'truths' that the Bunun experienced or shared, but to offer an interpretation of the past that validates the present. History taught the Bunun that they had a golden age in the past, when they originally lived in the western plains, had a written language and Christianity; yet it also explained the subsequent loss of this past through the processes of colonisation.

The idea of loss and rediscovery is apparent in Bunun perceptions of Christianity. Like other Bunun elders and early evangelists, Pastor Taupas Tanapima's recollections, mentioned in the early section of this chapter, suggested that their current problems, such as the loss of lands, written words, identity and autonomy, might be rediscovered in terms of Christianity. The proposal is further evident in the similarities between Bunun oral stories and biblical stories, as well as the 'rediscovery' of Bunun written scripts. These evidences prompted Bunun to regard the oral histories passed down by ancestors as *mamantuk*, true. Christianity was perceived as *mamantuk* because it restored them to the golden past when they had already accepted Christianity from Dutch missionaries and still lived in their own lands under their own customs.

# Chapter 3 Re-engaging the Ancestral Past

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<i>aukas kata Bunun minbuhbuh habas,</i>	Before, in bygone times, we Bunun people got lost.
<i>mulaliva kata tu siskuav kata mas Tama.</i>	We committed crimes as we turned away from Father.
<i>Pahas kata laupaku,</i>	Right now, we
<i>ina asa tu matip suhis lulus'an Tama dihanin.</i>	are returning to worship God the Father.

The First Presbyterian Hymn

I propose that the Bunun's adoption of Christianity took place in three major dimensions: the spiritual dimension, the ethnic dimension, and the moral dimension.

To examine how the Bunun people handled these crucial issues in the wake of Christianisation, I will address each dimension in a separate chapter. In this chapter, I explore why local people chose to affiliate with Christianity, and how the Bunun have reconceptualised their spiritual sphere after the coming of Christianity and adapted their relationships with, and attitudes toward, ancestral and Christian ways.

The Christianity brought by Pastor Hu, the Han Taiwanese missionary, was initially rejected by the Bunun majority as he tried to negate the indigenous religious beliefs and practices and replace them with Christianity. Despite the early Bunun evangelists seeking a radical change in their society by adopting Christianity, it was still considered as a set of exogenous religious beliefs and practices that had nothing to do with Bunun ancestral tradition. At that point in time the Bunun majority was not ready to accept Christianity. The Bunun evangelists even suffered frequent humiliation from their people. As recollected by Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, in the early period he could only preach Christian messages stealthily in Bunun settlements. The villagers

always reproached Bunun evangelists for bringing *kilistuhu* (the joking or insulting name of Christianity) to their community and accused him: ‘You are a Christian. You are posing threats to our lives. You are an inauspicious person and will bring bad luck, disaster, or misfortune to us. We will be infected by you if you come to our side’.

The uneasy sentiment against Christianity permeated all Bunun communities (Chen 2004; Tian 2003). The local people’s anxiety and hesitation toward Christianity was revealed in several intriguing messages. The Bunun were afraid that their present well-being might be disturbed by Christianity because it did not follow ancestral ways. From the Bunun perspective, it was clear that Christianity was at odds with their ancestral religious beliefs and practices in the early stage of evangelisation. In short, the acceptance of Christianity meant a complete break and discontinuity with their ancestral traditions, and most Bunun initially were not prepared to make that break.

Christianity had to adapt or reorient to Bunun practical needs. As the recollections of many early local evangelists and church documents have shown, in some settlements, such as Kufeng and Luntien, a growing population began to move gradually to Christianity; while in others, such as Hungyeh and Tauyuan, the villagers still hesitated and only a few families came to Christianity (Chen 2004:35-36). This variable and heterogeneous development of Christian communities among the eastern Bunun shows the Bunun did not come to Christianity collectively. Success could only be made in persuading the Bunun that the practical results provided by Christian spiritual beings were good. Through experiencing the power of Christian spiritual beings in terms of healing and dream, the Bunun became convinced that new Christian spirit was more powerful and efficacious than other spirits, and that by affiliating with it, their practical and physical well-being could be guaranteed.

I argue that the Bunun adoption of Christianity is not so much to do with exploration of new beliefs than with consolidating their present welfare. In times of social change, the Bunun possessed a very open and flexible attitude toward ritual innovation as long as their practical welfare could be secured. As a result of this approach they incorporated Christian beliefs and practices into their society and integrated them in a variety of ways into existing Bunun ancestral beliefs. Christianisation was indeed a gradual process of adoption of Christian practices rather than an absolute rupture among the Bunun.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Christian beliefs and practices were accepted as a package by the Bunun. Instead, the Bunun people attempted to make Christianity more like their own beliefs by reconceptualising or reclassifying the spiritual sphere passed down by ancestors. In this conception, the spiritual beings promoted by Christianity were compared to ancestral spirits in the very areas in which Bunun expected spiritual beings to be efficacious or influential. In the process of adoption of Christianity, the Bunun endorsed their pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices while acknowledging the supreme status and power of Christianity.

### **Experiencing the Power of Christian Spirit**

The Bunun people judge a religious practice by its efficacy. For the Bunun, seeing is believing. In pre-Christian times, there was more than one spirit medium in a settlement. Among them, minor ones could deal with simple and ordinary tasks, while more powerful ones could tackle serious cases. Different Bunun spirit mediums might have somewhat different techniques in performing their rituals, as reported in Sayama's research report (2008[1919]) and confirmed by my own interviews. The

Bunun people often sought out powerful spirit mediums and were willing to try new ones until the illness was cured.

It thus seems that Bunun were very open to receiving different ritual practices as long as their practical welfare was achieved. Ethnic boundaries did not prevent them from trying religious practices provided by other ethnic groups. For example, after relocating in the lowlands, the Bunun sometimes went to see Han Taiwanese spirit mediums for healing or driving out malicious spirits. As recollected by Pastor Taupas Tanapima, he had turned to worship of Han deities for prosperity during the early postwar period.

After the Japanese left, I began to wonder what we should worship now. First, I sought to learn our ancestral rituals which had been forbidden by the Japanese. I began to learn from my uncle who was a ritual leader living in another village. Although I made great efforts, I failed eventually.

Subsequently, I asked my Han Taiwanese friends what I should worship if I wanted to become a rich man, richer than other people in my village. I asked Han Taiwanese because I was convinced they must have concealed secrets in making their fortunes, which made them richer than the Bunun. They suggested I should worship Tutikung.<sup>9</sup> I went to Yuli and bought a woodcarving of Tutikung in the market. I made a small shrine on my land and worshiped it everyday.

In Pastor Taupas Tanapima's recollection, it shows the Bunun were very open to trying different ritual practices as long as their present well-being, as demonstrated in health, harvest, or hunting, could be secured.

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<sup>9</sup> Tutikung is a Chinese Groundskeeper God worshipped by Chinese folk religion worshippers and Taoists. A more formal name for Tutikung is *Fude Zhengshen*, literally the 'God of Fortunes and Virtues'.

Christianity was initially rejected by the Bunun majority. Only a handful of individual conversions occurred among young people who knew that adopting a new religion would have consequences for their ethnic condition or practical prosperity (Chapter 2). In such a situation, as a new set of religious practices, the efficacy of Christianity had to be experienced. The shared personal experiences with Christian God provided evidences for such being's existence and power and led to the conversion of a whole family. In this section, I attempt to illustrate how Christianity was experienced in terms of healing and dreams in the early mission period.



Figure 5 Constructing the First Luntien Presbyterian Church, December 1950 (courtesy of Pastor Talima Nahaisulan)

I began to collect people's conversion stories soon after I commenced my research. I was struck by the fact that nearly all interviewees proclaimed the main reason of his or her family's conversion was due to the cure of illness. A man who was born in 1954 reported to me that his family came to Christianity after his serious illness was cured by God in about 1959.

I was rather susceptible to disease after birth and got sick frequently. My parents went to see the spirit medium. The spirit medium told my father that I had to change my name for recovery to occur. Even though I changed my name three times, I was still ill. When I was about five years old, I got another serious illness. My father resorted to another spirit medium for treatment. The spirit medium told my parents they were destined to have no son, and I had to be fostered by another family or I would die. As a result, I was adopted by the family who lived behind my house. Although all these efforts had been made, I was still sick and as feeble as usual. One day, my father said: 'Bring the child back. Even if he dies, I would rather he die in our house'.

One night, my body stiffened suddenly. I couldn't move or speak. It was already late at night. In such an urgent situation, my father carried me on his back and walked to Hsiuluan to see the spirit medium immediately. There is a cemetery on the way to Hsiuluan. Walking by the cemetery, my father saw three giant *hanitu* (spirits) showing up in front of us. They blocked the road and did not let us pass. My father wielded his machete and fought against them. Fortunately my father won at last. Even though he won, my father still felt extremely scared and thought there might be another *hanitu* ahead. He considered retreating but my disease encouraged him to go forward.

After arriving at the spirit medium's house, the spirit medium explained to my father that the three giant *hanitu* he encountered were aiming to take my life. Among them, one had been killed by my father, the second one's hand had been cut off and it ran away, and the third was horrified by my father's bravery and it escaped. The spirit medium told to my father: 'You should go home right away, and slaughter an animal with four legs, sprinkling its blood around your house. If you do so, the *hanitu* will be scared to approach'.

At the time my family was very poor, and we had no animal with four legs. At first sunlight, my father walked to visit our relatives living in the neighbouring settlement and borrowed a piglet from them. Despite having followed the prescription of the spirit medium, my condition did not get better. At that moment, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan was paying his regular house visit. Seeing my condition, he asked my father: ‘Do you agree to take the child to church and let me pray for him?’ My father replied: ‘That’s fine. As long as you can cure my son, it proves that your god is more efficacious and mightier, and I am willing to accept your god’.

I was carried to church and Pastor Talima Nahaisulan prayed for me there. Exactly at the moment Pastor Talima Nahaisulan finished his prayer, I cried out suddenly and my body could move again. From that time, I became healthier and healthier. Afterwards, my family came to believe in Jesus Christ.

This recollection can only be fully understood in its socio-cultural context. After resettling in the lowlands, the Bunun suffered a variety of endemic diseases, such as malaria, flu, or diarrhea (Chapter 2). The Japanese colonists had tackled this issue by establishing local medical facilities and deploying nursing personnel, but the situation was worsening in the early post-war period. At roughly the same time, missionaries gained access to the Bunun people, with Bibles and western medicines. At the beginning of Pastor Hu’s mission work in late 1947, he worked with a doctor in Kuanshan who provided free medical service to attract Bunun to join the Christian congregation (Hu 1965, 1997[1984]).

Institutionally, the two biggest Protestant contributions to indigenous medical services came from the Mennonites and Mustard Seed Missions. The Mennonites were invited to assist in indigenous medical service in response to Rev. James I. Dickson’s

request in the early 1950s. The Mustard Seed was initiated in the mid-1950s by Lillian Dickson, who was the wife of Rev. James I. Dickson (Covell 1998). The Mennonites organised a mobile clinic with doctors, nurses and evangelists that went directly into indigenous villages and offered treatments. Lillian Dickson, who often accompanied the teams, spelled out the three-fold purpose that guided their work, ‘to present Christ as Saviour to all we meet, to heal disease and all manner of suffering, and to love sincerely and deeply those people whose lives we are privileged to touch’ (Dickson 1958, as cited in Covell 1998:202).

Many anthropologists have illustrated that during the initial period of evangelisation in many parts of the world, western medicines and medical services that the missionaries brought were key factors in attracting converts (Aragon 2000; Duncan 2003; Tapp 1989). This was also true for the Bunun. The medical services brought by the missions, such as western medicines, mobile clinics, the construction of hospitals or clinics in nearby cities, greatly improved the health condition of indigenous peoples. In the Bunun’s case, some researchers proposed the Bunun came to Christianity out of material considerations (Huang 1992:259-260; Yang 1992:7-8; Yu 2000). Some of them also observed that the spirit mediums lost their ‘market’ in the curing of diseases in the wake of missionisation (Coe 1955; Huang 1988).

I attempt to reverse the conventional view that the indigenous people adopted Christianity for practical materialistic or instrumentalist reasons only. In its place, in the Bunun case, I argue that the provision of medical services by missions had the unintended consequence of allowing the Bunun to experience the power of Christian God. Subsequently, the connection between the Bunun and Christian spirit was made. As Strathern and Stewart suggest, medicine and the curing of disease does not equate

with healing of sickness (1999). Healing is a complex process and always involves socio-cultural values.

The Presbyterian missionaries regarded the Bunun pre-Christian healing rituals as the height of superstition and thought they should be eradicated in favour of western medical services (Hu 1997[1984]). But the missionaries themselves were caught in a contradiction, proclaiming that illness was a matter of scientific detection, while also saying that sickness was a trial by God and its cure was ultimately in God's hands. The Bunun concluded from this missionary double-talk that their new rituals or instruments were merely their version of healing, which worked through their deities. For the Bunun, physical and spiritual health were interrelated and inseparable. According to the Bunun's pre-Christian idea of sickness and healing, physical affliction was often associated with the act of spirits (Chapter 1). They saw no contradiction between the missionaries' idea of illness and theirs. As recollected by Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, in the early evangelistic period, Christian doctors as well as ministers were regarded as spirit mediums whose power in curing diseases came from Christian God (Chapter 6).

Dreams also provide an important arena in which the Bunun acquire personal experience of and information from Christian God. In times of religious enculturation, Lohmann rightly proposes, '[d]reams facilitated the reception of religious beliefs among the Asabano before, during, and after their conversion to Christianity' (2000:75). According to the conversion narratives I collected, the Bunun encounter with the Christian God in dreams facilitated their acceptance of Christianity. A conversion story is recorded in the history of the Luntien Presbyterian Church as below. This is a story full of cultural implications.

There is a woman in our village whose name is Yu-chu Chin. She did not yet believe in

the Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning. For the safety of her baby in the belly, she asked the spirit medium to perform techniques to drive out prospective misfortunes. However, the spirit medium told her that her unborn baby was destined to die with no hope. This was fate. Her heart was very anxious. She could not sleep nor eat. One night, she had a vision in a dream. There was an extremely bright shining light illuminating her way while she was walking. An old man in white apparel appeared. His hair and beard were all white. He took out a present, gave it to her and said: 'Never lose this present'. She woke up at the same time she accepted the gift. Next morning, she asked Paki (from Jenlun village) to explain the dream, and was satisfied with the explanation. The Bunun people believe dreams are the revelation of the Sky. After that, Chung-wen Wu and other Christians went to her house to preach the gospel and pray for her every day. On Sunday of that week, she joined the Sunday service accompanied by her husband. She committed everything into the hands of the Lord Jesus. Under the protection of the Lord Jesus, she delivered a baby on 25<sup>th</sup> of February of that year. (Luntien Presbyterian Church 1989:27)

Dreams, as the channel between humans and spirits, are meaningful to the Bunun people. They perceive that what occurs in dreams is real and true (*mamantuk*). The figure and apparel of the old man in the dream gave the couple some clues to recognise him as the Jesus Christ seen in the illustrations brought by evangelists. They concluded that it was Jesus Christ who saved their unborn child. Furthermore, they recognised the power of the Christian God over other spirits that had failed to save their daughter through the spirit mediums.

I suggest the Bunun's adoption of Christian rituals did not mean that they first believed in the Christian God. Rather this was a trial and error process. Violation of ancestral taboos came to be seen as a test of the power of Christian God. According to

the history of Luntien Presbyterian Church, in July 1953, a woman delivered twins in the evening. She was attended by a midwife, Mulas Binkinuan, who was a Christian<sup>10</sup>. One of the twins died in the process of delivery. The other survived but was going to be killed. The Bunun perceived the birth of twins as weird and abnormal. This was a serious taboo, and the twins had to be killed immediately or the whole family would be engulfed in adversity. Mulas Binkinuan asked Pastor Talima Nahaisulan to come and negotiate with the family to save the baby. After negotiating, the family head agreed for them to take the baby away. They brought the newborn to Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's house. They knelt down on the ground and prayed for God's protection and blessing.

Pastor Talima Nahaisulan told me, at that moment, they prayed for God to protect the baby as well as his family for fear their behaviour might displease ancestral spirits which would bestow misfortune upon them. Other villagers contended they would be punished or receive retribution by spirits, but nothing bad happened. Thus Pastor Talima Nahaisulan concluded 'the power of the gospel is stronger than superstition' and claimed 'all the villagers were eager to follow Christian ways from then on' (Luntien Presbyterian Church 1989:26-27).

These cases show the initiative for conversion came from local people, and that it followed a close examination of the power of Christian God in terms of curing illness and dreams. This argument contrasted with the conventional view which suggested the indigenous people accepted Christianity for material considerations, such as access to medical services or relief goods. As Brett Charles Barker (2012) suggests, this

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<sup>10</sup> Mulas Binkinuan was the wife of Husung Nahaisulan. Husung Nahaisulan attended the Yuli Bible Training Session in 1949 and began to preach Christian messages afterwards. The couple was baptised in October 1949 in a nearby Han Tiawanese Presbyterian Church. Husung Nahaisulan was the elder brother of Pastor Talima Nahaisulan who is the first Presbyterian pastor in Luntien.

conventional view also implied that indigenous people were largely insincere in their conversion.

Contrary to this, I suggest that in terms of healing or dreams the Bunun were able to construct new relationships with Christian God. I frequently heard from both early Bunun evangelists and elders that the spirit mediums were afraid to see Bunun evangelists, who were thought to have real and powerful force. The spirit mediums were challenged in terms of healing results or dreams. The spirit mediums were shamed because they had less power than local evangelists. The abandonment of the healing ritual performed by spirit mediums meant the Bunun attempted to sever their relations with spirits they used to affiliate with in favour of Christian God considered more efficacious. Hence, at the moment of religious interaction, the power to maintain or restore balance continued to be the key element in people's sense of forces operating on their lives. Christianity was not accepted foremost because of its superior theology or worldview, but its power in healing and protecting.

### **Competing Powers: Christian Ministers versus the Spirit Mediums**

The Bunun spirit mediums played a significant and often underestimated role in the early mission works because they provided experiential verification of the power of Christian God. Prior to Christian contact, the Bunun held the view that there were many benevolent and malevolent spirits inhabiting various parts of the world. The spirit mediums were intermediaries between humans and spirits who occupied prominent positions in the pre-Christian Bunun society focused on ill treatment and petitions for well-being (Chapter 1).

However, the spirit medium was seen by Han Taiwanese missionaries as one of the worst manifestations of the bygone Bunun past. The mediums were denigrated by

Han Taiwanese missionary as witches, wizards, or false prophets and regarded as major obstacles to their evangelical work (Hu 1965; 1997[1984]). In Pastor Hu's autobiography (1997[1984]), there is a chapter entitled 'The Repentance of Wizards and Witches' in which three cases of the spirit mediums' failure under Christianity were recorded. I cite one of them below.

In the village of Vulvul, Haituan Township, Taitung County, there was a witch called Haido. She had heard of Jesus' gospel, but was not really saved; she just wanted to imitate the healing ability of our Saviour. She called herself the friend of Moon and claimed to be able to communicate with Moon directly. She often pretended to talk to Moon when she was curing a patient, and then spoke nonsense and said it was the instructions of Moon. Also, she often laid her hands on patients and prayed for them (Hu 1997[1984]:169).

This case shows how spirit mediums adapted their healing practices to social change, and in particular the early period of Christianisation. But from the missionaries' perspective, the healing rituals performed by spirit mediums were superstition to be rooted out. In the early history of Bunun missionisation, relentless campaigns were waged against the spirit mediums by the local evangelists, and they largely succeeded (Chen 2004; Hu 1997[1984]; Luntien Presbyterian Church 1989; Tian 2003).

Although the church attempted to control widespread belief in spirit mediums, the Bunun evangelists involved were likely to have agendas rather different from the missionaries. I have been told by many early Bunun evangelists that instead of seeing Bunun ancestral customs as fake, they fought against the spirit mediums because these spirit mediums were cheating people by distorting Bunun customs. Their task was to unravel the truth by means of power encounters between them and the spirit mediums.

Among all these conversion stories of the spirit mediums, perhaps Talum's conversion is the most well-known one. From the church's viewpoint, his conversion was considered one of the most prominent achievements of the Holy Spirit in Bunun early evangelisation (Chen 2004:39-40; Hu 1997[1984]:167-168; Tian 2003:25-27). However, the early Bunun evangelists held different views regarding it. In the following section I intend to show that although the early Bunun evangelists opposed Talum's cheating behaviour, they did not question the ancestral cosmology.

Talum was a male spirit medium who lived in Chinhe village of southern Taiwan. He claimed to have jumped into a river and his soul ascended to heaven where he spoke with Moon and was told to restore traditional religious practices. Subsequently, the Bunun would have good harvests, prosperity, and health. He called himself and was called by other people as 'Talum kaviaz' means 'Talum, Moon's friend'. He made the prophecy and warned the Bunun: 'The end of the world is coming. The world is going to melt and become water. But anyone who believes in him should not perish' (Hu 1997[1984]:167).

Talum's extraordinary experiences and powerful potency in magic and curing attracted the Bunun throughout the island. Even the Bunun of eastern Taiwan came to visit him regardless of the long distances involved. The mission work among the Bunun was difficult to expand. As Pastor Talima Nahaisulan reported:

Even those Bunun who had come to Christianity were fascinated by Talum's power.

They went to visit Talum frequently. I thought Talum's words and deeds had had great impact on our mission work. We told Pastor Hu that our evangelistic strategy was wrong.

We should deal with this problem first. The root of this problem is in Kaohsiung<sup>11</sup>. In

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<sup>11</sup> Kaohsiung is a county in southern Taiwan. Administratively, the southern Bunun settlements are within Kaohsiung County.

order to spread the gospel, we went to Kaohsiung to make Talum accept Christianity (Chen 2004:33-34).

In 1951, two Bunun evangelists from eastern Taiwan, Talima Nahaisulan and Tahai Palalavi, were sent to meet and challenge Talum. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recounted their first meeting:

We went straight to Talum's house. Seeing him inside, we entered the house.

I asked him: Are you Talum? Are you the man who practices magic for the Bunun?

Talum replied: Yes, I am.

I asked: Is your *hanitu* powerful?

Talum replied: Yes, my *hanitu* is powerful. But I believe your *kamisama* [god] is much more powerful than mine.

I said: Well, let us curse each other. First, it's your turn to perform the magic imparted by *hanitu* to kill me. If you fail to do so, then it is my turn to put you to death by summoning my *kamisama*. If we agree to do this, we can figure out whose power is the strongest.

Talum replied: Please don't do that. I will be killed by you because I believe your *kamisama* is much more powerful than mine.

I said: Well, I can call my *kamisama*, lay our hands on you and pray for you.

Hearing this, Talum's eyes opened widely. He looked at me and said: Are you sure? Are you sure you can do this for me?

I said: Sure. But you have to give up your paraphernalia and stop practicing magic.

Talum replied: Don't perform the curse. Anyway, I am going to listen to the words you say. I am going to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although Talum promised to abandon all his magic techniques, he did not keep his promise. Subsequently Pastor Taupas Tanapima was sent by Pastor Hu to convert Talum again. Pastor Taupas Tanapima told me that he went to Talum's house soon after his arrival. But Talum was not willing to see him. Finally, on a rainy evening, they met at Talum's house. Pastor Taupas Tanapima spoke to Talum:

I am not here to challenge you. You can do what Moon prescribes you to do. I hope we can share our experiences with each other. You share what Moon told you first then I am going to tell you about my god.

Talum agreed and shared a dream he had recently. Pastor Taupas Tanapima recounted what Talum narrated to him:

I was guided by a *hanitu* in a dream. When we walked by a flock of chickens, I was severely attacked by the chickens. They were pecking at my body everywhere. I almost lost my life but was saved by the *hanitu*. Subsequently we walked by a sugarcane field. Suddenly, the clear sky turned into gusty winds and torrential rain. I was beaten hard by the stout stalks and sharp leaves of sugarcane and nearly died, but was saved again by the *hanitu*. The *hanitu* explained to me that the reason I was attacked by chickens and sugarcane was that I had stolen chickens and sugarcane in the past. The *hanitu* admonished me against committing wrongdoings and said: 'What you have done determines your punishment'.

Then, the *hanitu* led me to a suspension bridge. Under the bridge was boiling hot water. The *hanitu* pointed to the other end of the bridge and said: 'You see. Over there is a good place, much better than the place we are standing right now. People living there are

happier and in a state of well-being. Do you want to go there? Over there is brighter and our place is darker'. I nodded to him and said: 'Yes, I am willing to go there'. As I stepped on the suspension bridge, it began to shake. The shaking became so violent I almost couldn't stand when I reached the middle of the bridge. I didn't want to give up. I began to run and jump with the hope of reaching the other end as quickly as I could. But when I jumped, I suddenly found I was falling into the boiling water. I was struggling in the boiling water but couldn't escape from it. I felt my body was dissolving in the water. While I was thinking I probably would die here, the *hanitu* delivered me by pulling me back to the river bank. My body had been burnt seriously by the boiling water. The *hanitu* said, my wrongdoings prevented me from reaching the other side of the bridge and warned me not to commit bad things anymore. In addition he asked me to confess my wrongdoings and repent of them. At the moment I cried out: 'Yes, I am willing to follow your teaching'. I woke up suddenly. I checked my body instantly and knew that it was a dream. I am sure this dream contains special messages the *hanitu* brings to me.

As Talum finished talking, Pastor Taupas Tanapima said: 'Now it is my turn to introduce my god to you'. He took out a Bible and showed it to Talum. He managed to interpret Talum's dream by using the terminology of the Christian church. He told Talum that in effect the other end of the bridge was Heaven and his wrongdoings were sins which prevented him from reaching Heaven. Pastor Taupas Tanapima continued to say:

What is called sin has been written in this book [Bible]. You belong to the Bubukun subgroup and I am from the Tak-banuaz. However, in front of God, there is no distinction between us. We are all the same. Who will go to Heaven and who will go to Hell is dependent on one's soul.

At the end of their meeting, Pastor Taupas Tanapima invited Talum to join the upcoming Sunday service. As usual Talum was reluctant to go and offered many excuses. Pastor Taupas Tanapima spoke to him: ‘If you don’t show up next week my God is going to make a mark (*sinpaskal*) on you’. Talum did not attend the Sunday service. Late that night, Pastor Taupas Tanapima received an emergency call from Talum. He asked Pastor Taupas Tanapima go to his house instantly. When Pastor Taupas Tanapima arrived, he noticed that something unusual had happened. A fox had entered Talum’s house and bit his sleeping son. The fox was firmly biting Talum’s son above the eyes on the forehead. The Bunun perceived this as abnormal, since wild animals should not appear in humans’ houses. This is a *samu*, or taboo. Talum thought this was a curse performed by Pastor Taupas Tanapima’s God. He dared not tackle it by himself but waited for Pastor Taupas Tanapima’s arrival. When Pastor Taupas Tanapima arrived, the fox was still holding tightly onto the young man. Talum’s son was screaming and in tears. However, Talum could do nothing but stand by the bed. Pastor Taupas Tanapima took a knife, caught the fox and cut its throat. Talum’s son was released finally.

The Bunun perceived incidents like this as *minpakaliva*, meaning something abnormal or miraculous and thus unbelievable. When *minpakaliva* occurs, according to the ancestral Bunun way, people have to sacrifice an animal and petition the *hanitu*. Pastor Taupas Tanapima told Talum: ‘Because this happened in your house, according to Bunun custom, you have to kill an animal and I will pray for you’. Talum killed a chicken right away and Pastor Taupas Tanapima practiced the sacrificial ritual and prayed to the Christian God. In his prayer, in the name of Jesus, he requested God take away the adversity that had occurred in Talum’s family, and blessed the child. After praying, Pastor Taupas Tanapima explained the reason for the accident. He told Talum

that he had promised to go to church and believe in God. This was his promise with God. But he broke his promise. Bunun perceive a person should keep his or her promises once the words have been spoken, otherwise he/she would *minkanaang*, or engulf themselves with prospective misfortunes.

Talum came to accept Christianity and accompanied the early Bunun evangelists to preach the gospel. His conversion story was widely circulated by Bunun evangelists to persuade others' acceptance. It was significant when spirit mediums became Christians because they dealt with *hanitu* and *hanitu* power. Their conversion demonstrated their recognition of the stronger power of the Christian God, which convinced other Bunun. What was more striking was that these early converts were convinced not by new teachings or cosmologies, but by the actions of Christian God who were regarded as being the same as the spirits their ancestors had had in the past. Pastor Taupas Tanapima told me, after Talum came to Christianity, he confessed to the public that the prescriptions of Moon he had announced previously were in fact his own fabrication. Pastor Taupas Tanapima said: 'My father always told me the story, so I know what Moon really said. I can tell what Talum said was wrong'. This narrative entails an assumption that Bunun ancestral beliefs were *mamantuk*, or true.

This perception differed radically from the foreign missionaries' statements, as mentioned above. I was extremely confused by the early Bunun evangelists' contradictory narratives, as on the one hand they resorted to the power of Christian deities to fight against the spirit mediums, but on the other they contended their ancestral beliefs and practices were true. I would soon discover that this is because Bunun viewed Christianity as the religion their ancestors had already held in the ancient past.

## Returning to the ‘Christian Past’

I intend first to point out here that the Bunun’s emphasis on continuity rather than discontinuity in times of religious change is a conspicuous characteristic of Bunun evangelisation. Although in the early contacts, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Bunun saw Christianity in terms of a radical break from their ancestral ways, increasingly the Bunun came to view Christianity in the light of their past, in which the line of continuity was emphasised. When explaining their motives in accepting Christianity, in most cases the Bunun elders made statements such as: ‘Christianity is the same as our ancestral teachings and practices in the past’. Statements like this are also recorded in Yang’s studies of the Bunun (2001, 2009). The Bunun take a great deal of evidence from their pre-Christian past, such as the ancestral oral histories, the idea of spirits, the way of praying, and injunctions, to support this statement.

However, this does not mean that the Bunun did not recognise the remarkable changes brought to them by Christianity. In effect, their religious life changed conspicuously. New religious elements, including the new Christian ritual practitioners, new relationships with spiritual beings, and new rituals, were adopted. Most of the ancestral religious practices were abandoned or adjusted. Why then did the Bunun emphasise the continuity between Christianity and their ancestral practices on the one hand but actually change their pre-Christian practices to such an extent that people could not recognise their former ways? What does continuity and discontinuity mean among the Bunun people?

Continuity and discontinuity existed at the same time in the early stages of Bunun missionisation. They were like two faces of the same coin. The hymn cited at the beginning of this chapter echoes this kind of statement. On the surface, this song seems

to highlight the break in the lives of Bunun before and after the coming of Christianity. It contrasts the Bunun ignorant bygone days – as people went astray and committed crimes – with the superior knowledge and morality of the time now, as people turn to the Father, the Christian God.

Nevertheless, the point is the Bunun propose a completely different explanation in relation to this song. ‘The key word in this song is got lost’, the original composer, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, stated emphatically. He went on to say: ‘The purpose of becoming Christian is to return to the original path travelled by our very early Bunun forefathers rather than distinguish ourselves from them’. Unlike Reithofer’s research in Somaip, PNG, where the local people stated ‘the ancestral traditions and ritual practices (*man*) of the past are denigrated as inspired by *Seten* (Satan) and contrasted to God’s wisdom and law (*Goden man*) manifested in the Good News (the Bible) and the Christian way of worship’ (2006:262-263), the Bunun did not hold absolute opposing views regarding their ancient past and the Christian present. It is particularly noteworthy that the account – returning to the ancestral path – was motivated largely by the narrative that the Bunun already had Christianity in the ancient past.

This narrative is evidenced by comparing ancestral oral histories to the Bunun’s current situation. The Bunun were shocked by the many similarities between their ancestral oral myths and the Bible stories. For example, they found many parallels between the ancestral flood story and the biblical story of Noah’s Ark in the Old Testament, including the Deluge, and the dove. I (CWF) quote my conversation with Valis Is-tanda (VI), a female elder:

VI: After hearing Bible stories, I came to realise that the Bunun ancestral stories are the same as Bible stories, but have no beginning and end.

CWF: *Really? What do you mean by that?*

VI: Our ancestors tell us the flood story and Christian missionaries tell us the story as well. In the story told by missionaries, Noah first sent forth a raven, then a dove, to check whether the waters were dried up or not. In the story told by our ancestors, the Bunun first sent forth a toad to catch the fire. The fire was extinguished on its way swimming back. Subsequently, the Bunun sent forth a *haipis* bird to catch the fire again. The *haipis* bird came back with the fire in its beak.

It seems to me that the Bible story and our ancestral story are similar. But, in contrast to the Bible story, our ancestral story did not explain what happened after the water receded.

I heard many elders like Valis Is-tanda claim that Bible stories reminded them of Bunun oral stories. They discovered that there were many similarities and often differences. In Chapter 2, I quote an anecdote in Pastor Hu's memoir in which the differences of the creation story were used as evidence by the Bunun to oppose the introduction of Christianity in the very early days of contact. However, at a later time the similarities were highlighted.

In addition, by incorporating the similarities with Bunun's historical narratives in regard to the Dutch (Chapter 2), the Bunun evangelists contended that the Bunun already practiced Christianity brought to them by the Dutch missionaries. As described by Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, he proposed that the Bunun first heard the flood story from the Dutch missionaries. The content of the story changed as Bunun lost their written words and this story could only be passed across generations from mouth to mouth over a long historical time.

Statements like this were further strengthened through Bunun conventional emphasis on the superiority of the written words, such as the Bible. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan described the challenge he met after he told the biblical creation story and the strategy he took in responding to it in the following recollection:

Soon after I finished my story, an elder stood up and said: ‘You say God created us, the humans. But what I heard from our ancestors is completely different from what you told us’. I told to him: ‘Please tell us what you heard’. The man went on: ‘I heard from my family elders that there was a hive inside a house. One day a bee larva fell down on the ground. It twisted its body several times and became a man. On another day a woman came out from a pumpkin’. Before I was able to make a comment, another villager stood up immediately and spoke to the man: ‘If what you say is true, why do we eat pumpkins?’ The audience separated into two camps, either pro or against the ancestral myth.

I spoke to them: ‘I have heard the same story told by my family elders as well. However, the story I am telling you this evening is from the Bible. The Bible is our lost written words in the past but now it has been found in America’. Most people stood on my side because I had the Bible. They considered the Bible was our lost written words and more accurate than an oral story.

The recollection shows that the authority of the Bible, and thus of Christianity was evaluated in terms of Bunun conventional values: the prominence of written word (Chapter 4). In short, the relationships between Bunun ancestral tradition and Christianity were complex and mutually strengthened. Neither could be sustained without the support of the other.

The Bunun and Christian traditions were not opposed but reinforced each other in many ways. The exercises in comparison implied that on the one hand, biblical stories were perceived in terms of Bunun ancestral myths, and on the other hand, the latter originated from the former even though they had been changed extensively. This perception had a double effect: they validated Christianity as their ‘ancestral tradition’ which had already existed in the ancient past, and at the same time they facilitated the acceptance of Christian messages as true and meaningful. Christianity was thus constructed on the basis of Bunun ancestral tradition by affirming rather than opposing it.

At the same time, since Christianity was considered their ancient and original tradition, to ‘return to the ancestral path’ the Bunun had to bridge the gap from what they used to call ancestral teachings and practices. As a consequence, instead of interweaving the ancestral traditions into a new Christian framework or vice versa, the Bunun were encouraged to rethink their ancestral practices. Their assertion of the rightness of Christian ways was linked to a choice of more powerful spirits, more powerful spirit mediums, and more powerful origin stories. Christianity was approved therefore on the basis of values incorporated within ancestral ways rather than in accordance with a new set of values linked to Christianity.

Although the Bunun began to perceive Christianity as their ancestors’ religion, this did not mean that the ancestral religious beliefs and practices were either preserved or eradicated in the process of evangelisation. From the Bunun perspective, the similarities in narratives between ancestral religious practices and Christianity meant the former originated from the latter and thus needed to be adjusted. This inevitable change of ancestral tradition is expressed through a local term, *minbuhbuh*, meaning getting lost, as indicated in the hymn at the beginning of this chapter. To return to the

ancestral path (i.e. the Christian way), the Bunun convention had to be modified. In the next sections, I will explore the accommodation and articulation between Bunun ancestral and Christian traditions, with regard to the ideas of Jesus Christ, God, and spirits.

## **Jesus Christ, Moon, and Spirit Mediums**

The Bunun people's understanding of Christianity began from the story of Jesus Christ. It could be said that Jesus Christ was the best-known biblical figure at the very early stage of Christianisation among the Bunun. The emphasis on Jesus Christ flowed from the Presbyterian tradition. The Christian's principal source of authority is Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church to which all Christians belong (Chryssides 2010:16). The Bunun Presbyterians often use the phrase - believing in Jesus Christ - to proclaim their religious affiliation and Christian identity. When Bunun Presbyterians pray, they address their prayers to Christ.

The prominence of Jesus Christ in Bunun contemporary religious life was the result of some careful articulation. As explained in Chapter 2, Christianity was regarded as the religion of the Americans, or of the enemy, during the Japanese period. The acceptance of Christianity came to be seen as a test of political loyalty. Jesus Christ was viewed as the criminal who opposed the state. Pastor Taupas Tanapima recollected what they had been taught by the Japanese police in regard to Jesus Christ.

What is called Jesus was a man who committed a crime. As a result, he was killed.

Don't worship him! Those who worship him will become criminals as well and will be punished subsequently. You should only worship the Emperor of Japan. He is a god descended from the sky.

It might be wondered how the Bunun Christians included Jesus Christ within their new religious framework as he was clearly a criminal who violated the social order. The early Bunun evangelists attempted to offer a new image of Jesus Christ by combining the elements from both Christian and Bunun traditions. Jesus Christ, as the bringer of the 'New Covenant of the New Testament', was considered as Moon, the shot Sun, who brought knowledge of ritual, ceremony, social norms, and a variety of stipulations to the Bunun in the ancient past (Chapter 1). As such, Moon in the Bunun's old tradition was equivalent to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

In addition, Jesus was considered as the 'shamanic exemplar' (Cannell 1995) and an additional source of power by spirit mediums, as illustrated in Yang's study (2006:102) and confirmed in my research. The encounter between the Bunun people and Christianity began with telling and hearing Jesus' story (Hu 1965, 1997[1984]; Liu 1990). Just a few months before the surrender of the Japanese in the Second World War, the Christian messages brought by Okuyama that deeply impressed Abus, a reputed Bunun female spirit medium, were the stories of Jesus Christ curing diseases, casting out devils, and other acts of magic (Hu 1965). The Bunun were fascinated by stories where Jesus was portrayed as a healer and a powerful spirit medium, in both the past and the present. He drives out demons who are rendered powerless because they recognise who Jesus is.

It is interesting to note that every person responded to different parts of the Christian messages. From the ordinary people's perspective, they saw Jesus as very similar to their spirit mediums because the Bunun spirit mediums set the tone for what they expected of ritual specialists, including Jesus Christ. At the same time, I discovered that the early Bunun evangelists who proclaimed themselves as followers of Jesus Christ were regarded as spirit mediums as well, especially when they

attempted to heal patients in terms of praying or the introduction of medical services. In short, as Jesus Christ was considered the ‘shamanic exemplar’, the distinction between Christian and Bunun ancestral traditions began to dissipate.

Moreover, by comparing the story of shooting of the sun with the story of Jesus’ life and ministry, the Bunun came to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was Moon, the saviour of humans. Today, the Bunun people point out many similarities between the two narratives. For example, they indicate the sky became completely dark when the sun was shot; the same scenario occurred when Christ was crucified. The period of darkness at the time of Christ’s crucifixion indicated that his death was seen as a turning point of cosmic transformation, just as illustrated in the story of shooting the sun. The blood shed by Jesus occupied a deep cultural value for the Bunun. Jesus’ blood shed on the cross was perceived to equate profoundly with the Bunun ancestral religious practices in regard to sacrifice. The Bunun resorted to the spirit mediums for healing in the past. In some cases, the spirit mediums would ask the patient to offer animals as sacrifice. The spirit medium sprinkled the animal’s blood around the patient and prayed for his or her recovery. The blood shed by the animal symbolised the replacement of the person by the animal. The animal was being substituted for the patient’s death. A similar logic was appropriated in regard to Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death and thus confirmed his role as a saviour. In the Bunun’s oral history, crises ended as social order was reconstructed after the Bunun followed Moon’s prescriptions. The idea of Christ’s sacrificial death was extended to have ended the social chaos for humans. Thus, Jesus’ sacrificial death saved human beings from extinction. In short, the images of Moon and Jesus Christ overlapped and explained one another.

## Reconceptualising *dihanin*

In Bunun pre-Christian social life, *dihanin* seems to play a less conspicuous role than *hanitu*. People resorted to *dihanin* in times of natural disaster or when being treated unjustly, as explained in Chapter 1. However, as observed in previous studies (Chiu 1997; Huang 1988; Yang 2001, 2009) and confirmed in my research, the Bunun assert that *dihanin* as the sky being is in fact the God of Christianity. I suggest, broadly speaking, that *dihanin* is comparable to God in this sense. However, the contemporary meaning of *dihanin* has been transformed substantially to fit with Christian ideas. The last two words, *tama dihanin*, of the hymn cited at the very beginning of this chapter clearly indicate the meaning of *dihanin* has undergone changes. In the past, *dihanin* was a force and principle rather than a personage in most cases. Here I will trace the trajectory of transformations regarding *dihanin*, *kamisama*, and God the Father.

I propose that the introduction of the personified Shinto deity, named *kamisama* by Japanese colonists, commenced a process of transformation in relation to *dihanin*. At the end of Japanese rule in the early 1940s, the Bunun were forced to worship Shinto deities in public or at home, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recounted that he was extremely confused by the Japanese notion of god, or *kamisama*. The Japanese police told Bunun that the Emperor of Japan was a god and people should worship him. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan says: ‘In effect, the Emperor of Japan is a living person, how does a living person become a god?’ He went on: ‘Moreover, the Japanese police proclaimed the soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the battlefield became deities’. Subsequently he raised the following questions: Was the god singular or plural? Was the god a living person or the deceased or both? He also pointed out that although the Japanese police always told them the Shinto deities were powerful the Bunun people never experienced their potency.

The idea of Japanese gods also confused Pastor Taupas Tanapima. To discover the truth, he opened the Shinto altar to see what the gods really were, regardless of the Japanese order against doing so and the prospect of spiritual retaliation. He recounted:

When I was seventeen or eighteen years old, the Japanese commanded us to abandon our ancestral rituals and worship their gods (*Amatela-o-kamisama*). They brought the altar to us and taught us how to worship. We, the Bunun people, did not have a *kamisama* before. We did have *hanitu*. But *hanitu* cannot be seen by ordinary people. With the increase of my curiosity, one day I opened the door of the altar secretly with the hope of seeing what gods really were. When I opened it, what I saw was just a piece of paper. I could not help but wonder: ‘Is this god? Is the Japanese god in fact a piece of paper?’

After the Japanese repatriation, the Bunun compared their ancestral religious practices to what they perceived to be Japanese beliefs and practices. Echoing Japanese disparagement of their ancestral beliefs, many Bunun stressed that the Japanese had no real religion, but only worshipped the ‘paper gods’. The Bunun spoke in ridicule of the Japanese ‘paper gods’ or ‘paper religion’. Although Bunun people were forced to pay their respect to Shinto deities by the Japanese police, by the war’s end the Bunun concluded that the Japanese god was fake and they were without true religion. In short, for the Bunun, Shintoism merely involved political rituals. Notwithstanding this, the new idea of a personified God associated with the term *kamisama* was introduced into Bunun society preceding the arrival of Christianity.

The image of Christian deities in human form was introduced to the Bunun through biblical stories, such as when God created the sky and the earth, and the Noah’s Ark, and Christian illustrations. In church documents concerning early

encounters between the Bunun and Christianity, they always mentioned the Bunun fascination with biblical illustrations. As described by Pastor Hu in regard to the trainees' reactions in the Yuli Bible Training Session, he stated: 'In addition, they are naïve in nature, when hearing the biblical stories of the illustrations, everyone is convinced that they are real. They see the illustrations as being the same as photos' (1965:408). Pastor Hu's description was confirmed in Pastor Taupas Tanapima's recollection. He told me he was very surprised to know that Christian deities shown in illustrations were in human form as well.

The newly introduced idea of God was appropriated to re-define or re-interpret the Bunun concept of *dihanin* in the wake of Christianisation. The Japanese term for god, *kamisama*, was adopted and frequently used in describing the Christian god by Han Taiwanese missionaries and Bunun evangelists in the early stages of missionisation. 'Do we have a god or not? If we do have a god, who is he and what is his name? Pastor Talima told me he used to begin his preaching by asking these questions in the very early days of evangelism. He recalled his first mission work at Masuhuaz, a mountainous settlement of southern Taiwan, as below:

In the first evening, we preached the gospel in the front yard of the local police post.

After singing songs, I began my sermon with a series of questions. I asked them: 'Do we have *kamisama* or not on earth? If we have *kamisama*, who is *kamisama*? Can we call our ancestors *kamisama*?'

I told them: 'If we look into our past, I am telling you, the Japanese *kamisama* has abandoned us and gone back to Japan with the Japanese military after its defeat. But it does not matter because that is not our *kamisama*, or the *kamisama* we need. If the Japanese *kamisama* were real and powerful, the Japan could not be defeated. Our

*kamisama* will never abandon us and will always stay with us in any circumstance. What I am telling you today is the real and true *kamisama*. He created the heaven, the earth, human beings and all the living creatures in the world. We already have a real and true *kamisama* in the sky. That is *dihanin*. The name we used to call him in the past. And this is what our ancestors wish us to keep in mind’.

In Pastor Talima Nahaisulan’s narrative as cited above, the use of the terms *kamisama* and *dihanin* is noteworthy. He uses these two terms, *kamisama* and *dihanin*, to refer to the sky being and adopts the former to elicit the latter. Perhaps the word *kamisama* was a popular word for God at the end of the Second World War but it appeared that *kamisama* could be replaced with the term *dihanin* in this context.

But in fact there was a difference between *kamisama* and *dihanin*. In pre-Christian times, *dihanin* was viewed vaguely as a domain with forces high above. Even though *dihanin* impacted on the Bunun’s life through celestial phenomenon, it did not involve itself in people’s day-to-day lives. They seldom individualised or personified *dihanin* as being. The term *kamisama* was first introduced during the Japanese colonial period. It was in fact not an exclusive term just for Japanese deities. As political rituals, Shintoism as well as *kamisama* were closely associated with Japanese colonialism. The defeat of Japan resulted in the retreat of Japanese *kamisama* because the Shinto deities represented the defeated Japanese.

Unlike Jehovah and Jesus, whose biographical details and behaviours were written down in the Bible and whose personal images were conveyed in terms of illustrations or religious paintings, in pre-Christian times the Bunun *dihanin* was known primarily through the moral codes it expected from humans, not through scriptural or visual representations of itself. The Bunun evangelists took special interest in this shadowy

concept of a supreme spirit and used it to translate the Christian God. Thus, the term *kamisama* with its personified implication became the heritage of colonisation which was appropriated by early local evangelists to facilitate Bunun's realisation of the Christian God, and thereby gain acceptance of Christianity.

### **Reclassifying *hanitu***

Although the Bunun emphasised a high degree of compatibility between ancestral and Christian tradition and focused on continuity in the early process of evangelisation, there was one area where conflict and contradiction were inevitable. That was the sphere of *hanitu*, or spirits. As explained in Chapter 1, in pre-Christian times the Bunun perceived they were co-inhabiting with a variety of spiritual forces, including place spirits, ancestral spirits, and the left and right spirits of humans. The spiritual was part of the ordinary rather than being supernatural. In addition, there was no distinction between a religious and a secular dimension. To survive and flourish in it everybody had to know how to manipulate the spirits. The pre-Christian ritual practitioners occupied a prominent role in Bunun society as they were the intermediaries of humans and spirits.

The common point between Christian God and Bunun spirits is that both of them have the same powers to heal, to protect, and to provide fertility and prosperity to human beings. Pastor Hu in his memoir (1997[1984]) demonstrated many cases of the horror Bunun showed under the threat of spirits, and saw his task as the casting out of these spirits in the name of Christ. The point was not upheld by the Bunun people. As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, a successful healing through Christian rituals meant that the Christian God was efficacious. Bunun looked forward to affiliating with the Christian God to receive protection and blessing. They thus perceived traditional spirits as weaker, but not fake.

This reclassification of the pre-Christian notion of spirits was propagated by local evangelists, for whom this was one means of adjusting their ancestral framework to Christian ways and justifying their ancestral religious beliefs and practices. I frequently heard from the elders that the benevolent spirits from whom they asked for assistance in the past were actually the Christian deities. In addition, the malicious spirits were Satan and evil spirits. They mistakenly called them *hanitu* because their ancestors had lost written words. With the rediscovery of written words in terms of Christianity, they returned to the right path, the Christian path. The radical change of loyalty from the spirits to the Christian God was perceived as continuity by the Bunun people. As Bunun considered the Christian God stronger, one of the major appeals of Christianity was that it drove the malevolent spirits out from every aspect of daily life. A statement I often heard in the field is that the *hanitu* escaped to other places far away from the Bunun's living world after the arrival of Christianity.

The reclassification of spirits did have a remarkable impact upon Bunun ancestral and Christian traditions. Even if the evil spirits had stepped out of human's living sphere, the Bunun continued to fear the threat staged by them. They continued to face illness and misfortune, and for these the actions of angry spirits appeared a more immediate and direct explanation than the notion of sin. However, the Bunun were not encouraged to explain or predict the cause of misfortune as it was in God's hand. Their disempowerment in interpreting, manipulating, or negotiating with the spirits made them rely heavily on the supreme power of the Christian God who was regarded as the new leader and protector.

## Conclusion

I suggest that Bunun evangelisation is in fact a process of gradual adoption of Christian practices. Experiential events, such as healing and dreams, played an important and often underestimated role in cultural transmission because they provided personal experiential verification of the foreign spiritual power. The Bunun came to adopt Christianity through direct experience with the power of Christian God. Christianity was not accepted primarily because of its superior theology or other ‘intellectualist’ features (Horton 1971), but for its power in healing and protecting (Yang 2006:102).

For the Bunun, a ritual is assessed by its consequences. Religion is not so much a matter of existential belief but establishing and strengthening one’s welfare in the present. The focus on physical or practical well-being made the Bunun relatively open to the new rituals, as long as their present welfare could be ensured. As a result, they initially experimented with Christian ways to heal sickness. The positive results in curing illness encouraged the Bunun to acknowledge the power of Christian God and affiliate themselves with the new religion.

It is clear that the Bunun’s acceptance of Christianity was not a sudden change or complete rupture with their ancestral tradition, but indeed a gradual process of adoption. Christianity did not come to the Bunun society as a package deal. Through the process of trial and error, the Bunun expanded their understanding of Christianity piece by piece. The spirit mediums were challenged by the demonstration of healing by the Christian God. As a result, Christian God was seen as powerful and *mamantuk* through the Bunun’s personal or shared experiences. The power to restore balance was the key concern in people’s evaluation of forces operating on their lives.

However, this did not mean that the Bunun adopted everything offered by Christianity. Although the benevolent spirits had been taken over by the Christian God and malicious spirits had been reclassified as devils in a Christian framework, the understanding of ancestral spirits still remains vague. In addition, the idea of *dihanin*, even though amended to fit the Christian idea of a supreme God, was still remote from the living. Moon became Jesus Christ but this was a different version of Moon. Rituals were decreed by Moon to keep the living in balance. Christian rituals were also seen as following the decrees of Jesus Christ to keep the world in order. But Jesus Christ's role as a spirit medium, which was not common of Moon in the past, facilitated the construction of the authority of Christian ministers among the Bunun society.

In addition, a key theme in this chapter is the Bunun belief that Christianity is an 'ancestral religion'. This conviction is tied to oral traditions concerning a deluge, notions of spiritual healing, and other parallels which are fixed at an idea of unfathomable past. Yet it is also connected to a historical event, the presence of Dutch in the seventeenth century, which possesses a clear idea of time sequence. It seems to imply that the Bunun have two golden ages: the first before the seventeenth century when they still possessed the writing language and the second the initial introduction to Christianity that was later forgotten (Chapter 2). The belief that Christianity is an ancestral religion is indeed a fusion of these themes. This is a combination of two different kinds of historical narratives and Bunun contemporary understandings of continuity between ancestral and Christian traditions. By doing so, the pre-Christian Bunun religious beliefs and practices were adjusted and consolidated. Christianity was also transformed at the same time. But the intellectual reading cannot explain the problem concerning the politics of conversion under missionisation. The articulation between Christian and Bunun ancestral tradition enabled the Bunun to rebut the foreign

missionaries' derogatory view that regarded the pre-Christian Bunun religion as 'primitive' or 'backslidden'. I suggest that from the Bunun viewpoint, during the initial period of dialogue with Christianity, the past was very much a part of the present and potentially a part of the future. The past was perceived as a resource that people could resort to in order to restructure themselves in the present.

# Chapter 4 Transforming Identity through the Power of Words

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Today, I am telling you. Our lost scripts have been found in America, and that is the Bible.

*Talima Nahaisulan*, first spoken in 1949

Written words in the vernacular inspired identity and pride among the indigenous Bunun people of Taiwan in their initial contact with Christianity. By examining the process of Bunun Bible translation, I argue that Christianity played a vital role not only as a buffer against official assimilation policies of the Han Chinese authorities but also as means of participating fully in the new world without sacrificing their Bunun identity.

Viewing writing as a transforming technology, as proposed by Goody (2000), scholars have investigated the effects of the introduction of writing on preliterate minority peoples. Some literature views local peoples' quest for writing or literacy from a pragmatic or economic consideration. They show that Christianity gave indigenous populations access to literacy, and as a result helped them to obtain better jobs or positions in mainstream society, thereby gaining economic advantages (Kipp 1995; Tapp 1989). Others investigate the power relations between languages and culture on translation in the process of Christianisation (Diamond 1996; Ramsay 2004). In Diamond's insightful paper (1996), she argues that the creation and dissemination of the Hua Miao script in China started a process of cultural and local political empowerment. The Hua Miao Christians drew upon the created script to elevate their social status and construct a new ethnic identity amidst the surrounding dominant groups. In the study of the Christian conversion of the Asabano of Papua New Guinea,

Lohmann (2001) observes that the introduction of literacy has changed people's access to religious knowledge and resulted in a reversal of the age- and gender-based social structure. Although writing offers a means of spreading religious ideas across vast distances, Lohmann argues, the key question is 'whether the bearer of ideas chooses to communicate his or her knowledge with others, and if so, with whom' (2001:95). In short, the introduction of writing goes far beyond merely instrumental considerations, and has a close correlation with ethnic identity, power and agency.

In the church's writings on the Bunun, it is repeatedly stated that they were preliterate prior to 1949. However, this is not what the Bunun people think. Bunun mythic history tells of a past when they lived in a homeland in western Taiwan. There they held vast tracts of land and had a written language. The historic tales explain how their homeland was lost as a result of successive waves of Han Chinese expansion, which prompted them to migrate into the mountains. Their invaluable written words were lost in a flood on their way to mountains. This loss of the written words is perceived as the main cause of their subsequent poverty, weakness and suppression (Chapter 2). This is why they were eager to contact the Christian mission when they heard that the Han Taiwanese Presbyterian missionaries were going to teach them written words. At the same time, emphasis on the Bible and literacy flowed from the Presbyterian theological statement – the sovereignty of God.

Written words in the vernacular have thus become a common concern for both the Bunun and the Presbyterian Church, enabling them to fight together against the official assimilation policies implemented by the Chinese Nationalist government, which posed a severe threat to the integrity of Christian and Bunun identity.

The restoration of balance between the Bunun and the state, or the Bunun minority and Han Chinese majority, was the main concern of the Bunun people. This could be achieved through the experience of Bunun identity in the process of Bible translation. The Bunun were able to negotiate the terms used in the translated Bible to better accommodate their sense of what the Christian messages were about, even when this sense differed radically from its original meaning or the doctrinal teachings of the foreign missionaries.

### **The Centrality of Words for the Bunun**

Bunun words have political and spiritual significance. In the Bunun's perception, the written word is always associated with pride, civilisation and power. Their mythic history (*minpakaliva*) narrates that they had had a written script, and accounts for its subsequent loss. I have mentioned one version of the myth of the loss of written words as narrated by Pastor Taupas Tanapima in Chapter 2. Here I quote another from *The Myths and Traditions of Formosan Native Tribes*, edited by two Japanese linguists and published in 1935.

The Bunun people had a written language in ancient times, but when our forefathers migrated from Lamungan<sup>12</sup>, while crossing the river, the written words fell into the river, were washed away, and found by Han Chinese people. Since then we have been illiterate (as cited in Yi 1994:174).

Bunun connect written words with dignity and pride. They are convinced that they had a glorious past when their ancestors still resided in the western plains and possessed a written language. However, due to the loss of the written words, they

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<sup>12</sup> Lamungan is perceived as the original homeland of the Bunun people. Some people believe it was situated in the western plain region.

became poor, weak and illiterate, which lead to them being conquered, dispersed and resettled, then exploited and subordinated by the dominant outside peoples.

Aside from the legendary written words, the Bunun highlight the power of spoken words as well. The ancestral religious rituals were derived from the words of Moon. The authority of the leadership of pre-Christian religious practitioners, including ritual leaders and spirit mediums, was constructed in terms of their ability to influence the spirits through their words. They were skilled in the use of chants, incantations and the actions needed for efficacious rituals. Their eloquence thus constituted an integral part of their authority (Chapter 1).

The connection between written words and civilisation is further constructed through the binary ethnic identification adopted by the Qing dynasty (1683-1895). As proposed by Diamond, '[l]iteracy, in the sense of ability to read the ideographic characters, has deep meaning in Chinese culture. It is one of the key markers that distinguish the advanced Han Chinese from the backward minority peoples' (1996:140-141). People of Taiwan were classified into two categories: subject and barbarian (i.e., Han Chinese and the indigenous populations). The barbarians were further classified as raw (wild, or uncivilised) and cooked (tamed, or civilised) barbarians. Literacy was one of the distinguishing criteria (Teng 2004). In this framework, the Bunun were 'raw barbarians' who were illiterate, ignorant, without history, non-civilised, and despised by Han Chinese.

The association of the written words with power relations was further strengthened during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945). Japanese became the official language and writing system across ethnic boundaries in Taiwan. It was not only a tool of communication but was embodied as a part of colonial power. The Japanese

authority used literacy as the basis for secular authority, with written regulations and other official administrative documents in Japanese. Knowledge of spoken and written Japanese was a necessity if the Bunun were to receive a full education and participate in the modern world. The Bunun who were proficient in Japanese were likely to be appointed by the colonial regime as police assistants, village heads, the head of the Youth Corps, or other village-based organisations (Chapter 2). From the colonial government's viewpoint, the introduction of literacy was a crucial tool to lead the illiterate Bunun into a civilised and modern world, and of course make them more easily governed.

### **The Creation of Bunun Scripts**

Presbyterian missionaries were drawn to the work of translation through their faith and history. Early English and Canadian Presbyterian missionaries emphasised the authority of the Bible. They contended that the Bible is the infallible Word of God containing all the revelations of God which He designed to be rules of faith and practice for his church. They claim that everything necessary for salvation is taught in the Scriptures plainly enough. From the moment the English Presbyterian missionaries arrived in Taiwan in the mid-nineteenth century, literacy and translation were integral parts of nurturing the adherents. It was extremely difficult for ordinary adherents and western missionaries to access Christian doctrines through Chinese characters, as the Presbyterian Church's early membership was drawn from the lower and working classes, and women and the plains indigenous adherents were all illiterate. Only a small number of converts could read and write Chinese. To facilitate their congregations and access to the Bible, Presbyterians have historically been active in

promoting the use of the local vernacular, Taiwanese, or the Church Romanization<sup>13</sup>, in Taiwan (Lin 1991:12).

For the Presbyterian model to work, the task of translation had to be conducted to facilitate and maintain the success of proselytising among the Taiwan indigenes. In his memoir, Pastor Wen-tsi Hu recalled that Rev. Dickson explained to him the significance of the vernacular Bible in sustaining the Christian beliefs of indigenous people. He noted (1997[1984]:230):

Rev. Dickson once told me that the cause for the disappearance of the thirty-six plains indigenous churches in the Yilan area was the lack of a Bible in their language, with the result that most of the converts could not be sustained.

The Presbyterian Church decided early on that church and home services throughout the indigenous territory should be conducted in local languages. Bible translation was consequently set as one of the immediate tasks to be undertaken at the beginning of Bunun evangelisation. Pastor Hu was sent by the Mountain Work Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan to work on the evangelical endeavour of translating the Bible among the Bunun people of eastern Taiwan. He arrived at Kuanshan<sup>14</sup> in November 1947 and lived there continuously until his death in 2010. He devoted himself to the grand evangelistic scheme outlined by Rev. Dickson. Pastor Hu recollected (1997[1984]:257):

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<sup>13</sup> The Church Romanization uses romanised characters and some diacritics to represent the local spoken language. It arrived at Taiwan with the arrival of England Presbyterian missionaries across the Taiwan Strait in the mid-nineteenth century. This was an alternative writing system for Han Taiwanese based on phonetic alphabets rather than characters. This advantage resulted in it being widely used by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. There exists a substantial body of literature written in Church Romanization, mainly the liturgy, hymns and poems.

<sup>14</sup> Kuanshan is inhabited mainly by Han Taiwanese but surrounded by the Amis and Bunun settlements.

When Rev. James Dickson, who was the commander-in-chief of Taiwan Mountain Evangelism, appointed me to carry out mission work in the mountains, he ordered me to do two things. The first was to disseminate the gospel as quickly as possible, and the second was to translate the Bible into Bunun vernacular.

Pastor Hu was committed to working through the local language. He began learning the Bubukun dialect of Bunun language from Bunun nurses at Shen-Ying Hospital in Kuanshan. He also received the Bunun name Husung, and was respected as Tama Husung by the Bunun.<sup>15</sup> His willingness to learn the Bunun language, adopt a Bunun name, and live and eat with the Bunun during his mission work has become a core part of the contemporary tales told about him. Soon after his arrival, Pastor Hu and his wife set out to gather Bunun from outlying settlements and they held Sunday school and services at the hospital in Kuanshan. He preached to them in simple Japanese and taught them a few hymns. But he soon discovered the Bunun had a weak grasp of both Chinese and Japanese. Pastor Hu noted (1997[1984]:86):

After preaching gospel at Shen-Ying Hospital for two or three weeks, I found out, except for several youngsters who could understand Chinese, most of the Bunun participants middle-aged or elders could only speak very basic Japanese or were completely unable to understand Chinese. As a result, whether hymns were sung in Japanese or Chinese, it was not possible for them to express their emotions and feelings toward God.

In an effort to expand comprehension of Presbyterian doctrines, Pastor Hu began to include the local language in church services. He requested the Bunun nurses at

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<sup>15</sup> In Bunun kin terminology, *tama* literally means father. They refer to any man of the same generation of their father as *tama* plus their personal name, such as Tama Husung. Usually, they use this address to venerate somebody as being at their father's position, even though there is no kinship relationship.

Shen-Ying Hospital to translate a well-known Taiwanese hymn, *God Created Heaven and Earth*, into Bunun vernacular (1997[1984]:86-87).

真主上帝造天地	<i>Manantuk akia,</i>	The true deity
	<i>kai-oni mas dihanin.</i>	Created the sky
能光能暗無人能		
冥轉為日日轉冥	<i>Hanian, labian,</i>	Day, Night
生成萬物功勞圓	<i>uka duma mahtu kai-uni.</i>	No other is able to create

This hymn was widely used by Pastor Hu to praise God. He described how the Bunun learned to sing this song instantly and always sang with great enthusiasm. Two months later, with the improvement of his proficiency in Bunun language, he suddenly found there was a terrible mistake in this hymn. The Christian God was translated as *akia*. The term refers to the Han Chinese deity which is perceived by Christians as an idol. ‘It was extremely awful’, Pastor Hu recollected. ‘I violated the first of the Ten Commandments: You shall have no other gods before me. The song I taught did not praise God. On the contrary, I made them sing loudly that the idol is true’, he noted in his memoir (1997[1984]:87). He immediately replaced the term *akia* with *kamisama* the Japanese term for god. He attributed this misinterpretation to the Bunun lack of a concept for God. He suggested, ‘The Bunun religion belongs to primitive animism. They only believe in the innumerable evil spirits in the world. They haven’t worshipped God and they don’t have a term for God either’ (*ibid.*).

This incident reveals Pastor Hu’s situation in the early stage of evangelisation. As a foreign missionary, he was greatly handicapped by lack of sufficient knowledge of the Bunun language and culture, which prevented him from carrying out efficient mission work. To avoid similar events happening again, Pastor Hu tried to find a native

speaker who was able to speak fluent Japanese. From February 1948, Pastor Hu worked closely with a Bunun, Kinoshita, who taught him the Bunun language and worked as his mission guide and translator when conducting mission outreach in neighbouring Bunun communities. After several evangelical tours, he was appalled by the Bunun's heavy consumption of alcohol and continuing belief in what he termed 'devils' and 'witches' (Hu 1997[1984]:177-182). These failings were, in his view, the result of poverty and ignorance. In January 1949, he transcribed the Bubukun dialect of the Bunun language and developed an alphabet of seventeen letters (including five vowels and twelve consonants) which would more effectively represent the phonetic and tonal system of the Bunun language. For Pastor Hu, the creation of the romanised Bunun script was intended to help the Bunun overcome their dire conditions.

### **The 'Rediscovery' of Written Bunun Words**

The Bunun perception that the written word had preceded the Presbyterian missionary prepared them to accept Christianity. The introduction of written Bunun words attracted the Bunun Township Mayor as well as the Bunun people. The romanised Bunun was first introduced at the Yuli Bible Training Session between 29 January and 4 February, 1949 (Chapter 2). Pastor Hu instructed the twelve 'disciples' as he dubbed them, (1997[1984]:114) to read and write using the romanised Bunun script. The Bunun trainees were soon capable of writing their Bunun names in romanised script and worked together to translate Japanese language hymns into Bunun. As one of the trainees, Pastor Taupas Tanapima recalls, 'Pastor Hu was particularly overwhelmed by our fascinated response to the written Bunun scripts'. Pastor Hu concluded that the Bunun were receptive and quick learners. They were very much in earnest about learning to read and write (Hu 1997[1984]:114-115).

In the church records, the Bunun were perceived as preliterate prior to 1949. This was the first time that the Bunun had their written words. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan credited this outstanding achievement to Pastor Hu in particular. However, the Bunun did not agree with this statement. Their accounts, passed on by oral tradition, emphasised that the Bunun script was not invented but rediscovered through the arrival of Christianity after World War II.

The rediscovery of the written language proved that the Bunun were indeed a literate people. Pastor Manias Is-tasipal, an early Bunun Presbyterian evangelist who worked with Pastor Hu in Bunun Bible translation between 1957 and 1970, recounted the first time the villagers of his settlement saw the legendary Bunun written word in 1949.

My first contact with Christianity occurred when I was about ten years old. In an evening congregation, Pastor Taliban Tansikian demonstrated the written Bunun words to us. I saw that many elders were very excited. One elder even stood up and said: ‘Our ancestors always told us that we, the Bunun people, once had written words, which got lost in a deluge in the past. Today, I am delighted to see their return’.

In Bunun language, *patasan* refers to written words, books, figures, or drawings. The noun root *patas* means the drawing of lines. Even though the Bunun had no idea what their ancient written words looked like, the word *patasan* lead them to imagine that their written words might be made up of drawn lines. This is why, when elders saw the romanised Bunun script, they came to agree unanimously that these were their original words.

Through the rediscovery of written Bunun words, Christianity was inextricably linked to the Bunun language and culture. They took the similarities between the

ancestral flood myth and the biblical flood story as evidence to demonstrate that they already had Christianity and a Bunun Bible in the ancient past, but it had all been washed away by the flood. The statement cited at the very beginning of this chapter is one expression of the rediscovery narratives. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan made a remarkable link between the lost written words and the Bible. He told the villagers: ‘We have found the lost written word in America and that is the Bible’. It is particularly noteworthy that this statement was widely accepted by the Bunun at that time (Tian 2003:31).

Furthermore, the Bunun saw similarities between Jesus Christ and Moon through the spoken and the written words. As Chapter 3 explained, Christ was identified as Moon. In their oral history Moon had brought the words of ritual to the Bunun and through those ritual words, order and well-being were established. Christ was quickly perceived in similar terms. As the Word, the revelation of God, he brought ritual integrity and order. According to the Gospel of John, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1), and Jesus Christ is the word of God. Jesus Christ was accepted as Moon and through his words the Bunun’s present practical well-being could be achieved. This convinced the Bunun that Christianity came from their cultural heritage and was not a foreign borrowing. For the Bunun, Christianity is believed, like the written language, to be their own authentic possession, which they have always had.

The creation of the romanised script opened up a new history among the Bunun. Due to the Bunun’s overwhelming interest in the Flood story, Pastor Hu first tried to translate the Bible story, Noah’s Ark, into romanised Bunun script. He published this booklet in October 1949, and it was extensively used as the very first primer in Bunun evangelisation (Hu 1954). The Gospel of Matthew in romanised Bunun script was

subsequently published by the Hong Kong Bible House in 1951. The first Bunun hymnal book *XODAS-SING* in romanised script became available the following year. This was an outstanding achievement, as the Bunun were the first indigenous people in Taiwan with their own Bible and hymnal translated into the vernacular. Six years after the publication of the Bunun Gospel of Matthew, in 1957, the Amis people finally had the Epistle of James in their language (*cf.* Lee 2013).

Even though the Bunun Bible translation was commenced at such an early stage compared to other indigenous groups, the Bunun New Testament was not published until 1974, more than twenty years after the publication of the Gospel of Matthew. Why did it take so long to publish it? To answer this question, in the following sections, I attempt to explicate the tensions between the Bunun people, the Chinese Nationalist government, and the Han Taiwanese missionaries in the process of Bunun Bible translation.

### **The Struggle Against Assimilation into a Chinese National Identity**

The assimilation policy implemented by the state posed a severe threat to the integrity of Christian and Bunun identity. Taiwan was taken over by the Chinese Nationalist Party in August 1945. Soon after its rise to power, a series of assimilation policies were implemented to transform the ‘non-Han Chinese’ into ‘Chinese’. The state launched a single-language policy aimed at eradicating Japanese, and prohibiting other Chinese dialects or indigenous vernaculars. Mandarin was the ‘national language’ for schooling, publication and public affairs. As Harrison commented, ‘Mandarin was at the centre of the government’s assimilationist policies and was seen as being essential to the construction of a “national” outlook’ (2001:69). In 1951 the government launched the Mountain People’s Lifestyle Improvement Movement, which sought to

change native language, clothing, food, housing, daily life, and customs. In short, Mandarin was recognised officially as the sole medium for education, national construction and modernisation.

The single-language policy seriously impeded the development and use of the romanised Bunun script, as well as the Bunun language, which was judged unacceptable by the state as a legitimate medium of communication. The state demanded that standardised Mandarin was the national language, and that Chinese was the national written language. Mandarin became the classroom and public tongue by default, achieved through compulsory education, government, law, and economics. The Bunun had no alternative but to learn Mandarin and written Chinese in schools. Children could only become literate by learning Chinese at the nearest public schools, where all instruction was conducted in Mandarin.

The official assimilation policy posed a pervasive threat to Bunun identity based on their culture and language. The first official prohibition of the romanised script in church activity was issued in 1953 by the Taiwan Provincial Government. Two more official documents were issued by the Taiwan Provincial Government in 1954 and 1955 to reiterate the illegality of the use of romanised script in church, and to authorise the police to crack down on it. Pastor Hu met with constant interference and harassment by the police pertaining to the use of romanised Bunun script for translation. Even worse, the Bunun Gospel of Matthew was confiscated by the police in some places, as reported by Pastor Hu (1965:423). The government viewed the romanised script as a foreign threat to the national education system, as well as to Chinese national identity.

The Bunun language was banned as an official medium for communication, with Mandarin offered in its place. At that critical moment, the Han Taiwanese Presbyterian missionaries worked hand in hand with the Bunun evangelists against the encroachment of the state. Still, the Bunun language remained alive in Presbyterian and Catholic churches. The Bunun Presbyterians insisted on using Bunun language in church and home services even though they were closely monitored by officials. Meanwhile, the relationship between Catholicism and the state was more amicable, even though the Bunun Catholic Church incorporated Bunun language into church services from the mid-1950s. Mandarin was used by Western Catholic missionaries as the main language in their congregations, as they had spoken Mandarin before being deployed to Taiwan after the Second World War. However, the words spoken by western missionaries were simultaneously translated into Bunun vernacular by local catechists.

The official prohibition on the romanised Bunun script had great impact upon Bunun Bible translation, which was forced to stop for a while. Pastor Manias Is-tasipal recalls that one day several police officers came to Pastor Hu's house and showed him an official document in regard to the prohibition of the romanised script. Their translation work was forced to stop for several months. When looking back to these struggles, Pastor Manias Is-tasipal states:

At that time, the Communist Party of China approved and adopted the romanised script for their written words.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese Nationalist government was afraid that the romanised script would become the common medium of communication between the communists and us if we continued to use it. People say that the Communist Party

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<sup>16</sup> Here, Manias Is-tasipal refers to the adoption of Pinyin system in China. The Pinyin system is the official phonetic system adopted by the People's Republic of China for transcribing Mandarin pronunciation of Chinese characters into the Latin alphabet.

previously conducted guerrilla warfare in remote mountain regions to attack the Chinese Nationalist government in China. Because of this, the Chinese Nationalist government feared the communists would once again penetrate the indigenous communities in the remote mountain areas, and would instigate the mountain peoples to cooperate with them to overthrow the government by using romanised script as a secret code. This was why the state instituted the ban against using the romanised script.

The narrative above shows that the official prohibition of the romanised script had a political motive as well. In March 1957, the first meeting of the Consultative Group for Translation into Tribal Languages was held in Taitung, a city in southeastern Taiwan. A compromise of sorts was reached at the meeting. The government allowed the church to translate the Bible into local language but only if done using the Chinese National Phonetic Script or *Zhuyin* system, which was the only officially recognised phonetic system (Covell 1998:238-239; Lee 2013:99-100). The *Zhuyin* system is the phonetic notation for the transcription of spoken Chinese, particularly Mandarin. Consisting of 37 symbols and four tone marks, it can transcribe all possible sounds in Mandarin. The *Zhunyin* system is widely used as an educational tool in Taiwan, in distinction to the adoption of the *Pinyin* system in China. But experiments with the phonetic symbols were also unsatisfactory. As pointed out by Pastor Manias Is-tasipal, the existing 37 phonetic symbols of the *Zhuyin* system could not accurately represent several consonants in Bunun, such as b, d, ŋ, v, and ǝ. They therefore made minor revisions to some phonetic symbols to meet their needs.

Pastor Hu and Pastor Manias Is-tasipal went back to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which had been translated into romanised script, and changed them into the officially recognised phonetic symbols. In the meantime, they published the Bunun Hymn Book (in 1958) and catechism (in 1960) in phonetic symbols. However,

the modified phonetic symbols were banned by the government after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966. The Bunun Bible translators were accused of damaging the national writing system by using the new, modified phonetic symbols. However, after repeated negotiations with the Chinese Nationalist government by Western missionaries, the government tacitly agreed to the use of modified phonetic symbols in indigenous Bible translation, the local evangelists recollected.

The adoption of phonetic symbols in Bible translation was strongly opposed by some local evangelists as it prevented the Bunun from accessing their written words directly. They asserted that for elder or middle aged Bunun, who had not attended primary school, the *Zhuyin* symbols were too difficult. They insisted on the use of romanised Bunun script in translating the Bible or other church materials. At the end of the 1960s, Pastor Hu and Manias Is-tasipal began to change the phonetic symbols into romanised Bunun script in secret. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan also urged the publication of the new Bunun hymn book in romanised script with Chinese translation in juxtaposition. In 1975, the new Bunun hymn book *Pisusling* was published. This event had a great deal of meaning for the Bunun, involving not just the availability of the book itself but also the circumstances surrounding its publication. In an interview, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recollected:

At that time, the government strictly prohibited the use of romanised script. Our behaviour had overtly violated government policy and put us on the edge of danger. We gathered early in the morning, every Monday to Wednesday, at the premises of the Presbyterian Church of the United States in Yuli. The situation became very tense. The police could intrude at any time. Therefore, we were always ready to run away with our manuscript.

There was a female western missionary of the Presbyterian Church of the United States. She had a Bunun name, Aping, and was a specialist in music. She collaborated with us and worked as our consultant in music. Because the situation was so strained, we could merely jot down the script on note pads. When we completed the translation, the situation became even worse. The police came frequently with the hope of confiscating the manuscript. There was no hope for its publication.

Miss Aping's brother served in Taiwan and occupied a high rank in the American military. Fortunately, her brother was ready to return to the United States for one year's leave. She took the manuscript secretly to her brother. Because her brother was in a high position in the American military, his luggage did not need to be checked by Customs. As a result the manuscript was brought to America and stayed there for a year. The police came to search the premises in Yuli as well as my place. Nevertheless, they found nothing because the manuscript had been taken to America. One year later, the manuscript returned to Taiwan. I worked with my son-in-law to make the final edition for publication secretly. I waited for a good time to publish it, when the situation had become more relaxed.

These prolonged struggles between the Chinese Nationalist government, Presbyterian Church, and the Bunun illustrate that the work of Bunun Bible translation was conditioned by the larger complex social and political contexts of Taiwan. The state insisted on the Chinese identity while the Presbyterians (including Han Taiwanese and Bunun adherents) proclaimed their local or ethnic identity in post-war Taiwan.

In such a situation, the Bunun people faced even more hardships than the Han Taiwanese Presbyterians. Facing the dominant Han Chinese culture and population, the

vernacular and the written words preserved in the church become the significant markers of their identity. The Bunun identity could only be achieved and maintained by means of becoming Christians. Becoming Christians gave them a right to access a range of resources provided by the church, such as secondary education, vocational training, and medical services. In effect, the facilities offered by the government were not sufficient to meet the Bunun needs. The Bunun looked forward to receiving all these resources to improve and modernise their day-to-day lives and thus accommodate to the outside world. This was crucial to the Bunun. It demonstrated that they could be a part of the modern world without assimilating into Chinese culture or becoming Han Chinese. In short, they were able to become modern through the church, without sacrificing their identity.

### **The Translation Exercise: Contested Authority**

The issues debated here are not about linguistic adaptability but rather the struggle between Han Chinese, the Presbyterian missionaries and the Bunun in the process of the Bible translation. For Pastor Hu, the difficulty in Bible translation was attributed to the discrepancies between the two languages. He noted, ‘Greek is a civilised language, whereas Bunun is a simple language with only several hundred words. Sometimes, it took several days to translate a sentence’ (1997[1984]:272).

The Bible translation became a crucial pathway to civilise the Bunun society and lead the Bunun toward the idealised religious life in which the sovereignty of God was demonstrated in the eyes of Pastor Hu. But, the Bunun consistently defended the translation against Pastor Hu, who proclaimed that the Bunun language was inadequate. The debate shows that on the one hand Pastor Hu’s authority was based on the Presbyterian theological tradition. On the other hand, the Bunun people’s intervention

was also an important force of influence on Pastor Hu's Bible translation. The following sections illustrate these ongoing struggles.

### *The Sovereignty of God*

Pastor Hu's perception of the Bunun pre-Christian religious ideas and practices was decisively shaped by the Presbyterian theological statement: the sovereignty of God. 'To owe glory to God' is the fundamental theological idea and worldview upheld by the theologian John Calvin, who was the key figure of the Reformed tradition. Calvin proposed the sovereignty of God should cover the whole spectrum of people's lives, as well as the world, including both sacred and secular domains (Lu 2012:40-41). As demonstrated by Troeltsch (1992[1931]:590-591), one of the distinctive characteristics of Calvinism was to restore a holy community, a Christocracy, in which God is glorified in all their activities, both sacred and secular. The idea of a holy community gives independent expression to the individual's ethical duty to preserve and activate their election, and to the abstract exaltation of the Scripture.

This theological idea emphasises the sovereignty of God by condemning all forms of idolatry or paganism. Due to the emphasis on practising the sovereignty of God in this world and an active engagement in political affairs, Lu indicates the Reformed tradition became 'a Christianity of modifying the World' (2012:41). This theological tradition was inherited by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. It exalted the sovereignty of God and resisted every effort to offend that sovereignty. It emphasised its role in 'engaging the world', 'modifying the world' (*ibid*:40), 'dismantling idols', and 'enlightening the faith' (*ibid*:58).

Pastor Hu revealed his unwavering belief in the sovereignty of God and a deep sense of God's personal providence, which he conveyed to his ministerial students

through sermons, catechism, and scripture. He regarded the Bunun as living in a world surrounded by numerous devils and ghosts; they were tightly bound by backward superstitions. He viewed his mission as freeing them by demonstrating the sovereignty of God through the process of the Bible translation (Chao 1998:142; Hu 1997[1984]). Notwithstanding that Pastor Hu's values and behaviour invariably had great influence on the growing Bunun Christian community, I argue the values and beliefs of the Bunun people were equally decisive. Pastor Hu shaped Bunun Christian adherents, and the contours of the emerging Bunun Christian movement, just as surely as they shaped Pastor Hu. It is vitally important that we learn far more about the Bunun side of the equation.

### *Debating Issues in Bible Translation*

The choice of a particular local term in the Bible translation invariably had unexpected political as well as semantic implications. As mentioned above, a translation of the Bunun Gospel of Matthew was issued in 1951. This was the first published Bible in indigenous vernacular in Taiwan. However, it was completely discarded by Pastor Hu few years later. Pastor Manias Is-tasipal speculated that this was probably due to his dissatisfaction with several key words, such as God, the Holy Spirit, soul, and evil spirits in the early translation. Before I elaborate on this point, I shall first explain the operation of the Bunun Bible translation.



Figure 6 The Bunun Bible Translation Committee, September 23, 1965

(courtesy of Pastor Manias Is-tasipal)

Pastor Manias Is-tasipal recalls that at that time Pastor Hu attempted to translate each biblical verse from a Japanese or Taiwanese Bible into the Bubukun dialect by himself. Then he read it out and Pastor Manias Is-tasipal played the role of a native speaker to check whether the sentence made sense or not. If not, he provided suggestions for modification. After an agreement was reached, Pastor Manias Is-tasipal typed the sentence on a typewriter. Once an initial Bible book translation was prepared

by the translation team, a group of local evangelists not directly involved with the first translation came to check it. The Bible translation committee members were nominated to cover the different dialects and regions among the Bunun. The full draft translation of the New Testament was completed and under review in 1964 (Hu 1965:424). However, it was not issued until 1974. During those ten years, in addition to the frequent interferences and impediments generated by the state as described earlier, there were serious debates between Pastor Hu and the local Bunun evangelists with regard to the contents, which actually suspended the progress of their review for several years.

One local evangelist who engaged in this event reported frankly to me that Pastor Hu, in interpreting the Christian doctrines, had brought his own very imperfect understanding of Bunun culture to bear on that translation. He emphasised: ‘Even though Pastor Hu was able to speak the Bunun language at that time, his knowledge of the Bunun culture was still like a first year pupil of primary school’. Their disputes were mainly due to the choice of particular local terms in the Bible translation. In the following section, three case studies are used to illustrate this point: *samu* as ancestral stipulations or backward superstitions, the term used to define Christian sin, and that for the Christian God. Given the fact that throughout the Bible translation process, the Han Taiwanese missionaries’ and the local Bunun evangelists’ disputes were probably many, these three case studies represent a mere fraction of all the disputed translations. However, these case studies might also be the most prominent ones, which I encountered again and again during my research. The case studies I quote here are not used to construct a model by which other disputes between the Presbyterian missionaries and the local evangelists could be interpreted. Instead, I use these cases to

propose that the Bunun experienced their identity through the process of negotiation in the Bible translation.

### **Samu: Ancestral Norms and Stipulations or Superstitions?**

The foremost cause of their confrontation came from the interpretation of *samu*, the pre-Christian Bunun norms or stipulations perceived by the Bunun, which Pastor Hu viewed as superstitions and pagan taboos which should be eradicated completely.

In pre-Christian times, the Bunun observed numerous *samu* to invite the blessing of the *hanitu* (spirits). For example, they did not eat sweet food during the planting season. At harvest time, the people did not eat sugar, smoke cigarettes, or chew sugarcane; they were even forbidden to drink water or relieve themselves in the fields. A Bunun pastor, Ibi Taki-ludun, in his master's thesis (2006), *The Comparison of the Bunun Taboos (Samu) and Christian Beliefs*, classified the pre-Christian Bunun *samu* into six categories: the life-cycle ritual, the calendrical ceremony, morality, weaving, hunting, and ancestor-feeding, which covered the whole spectrum of Bunun pre-Christian social life. In the Appendix about the introduction of *samu* in his thesis, he contends that it was crucial to follow *samu*, as it would bring good fortune and a prosperous life to the Bunun.

*Samuan hai tupaun tu minindangad madas Bunun masaupa mas masial tu sin-ihumis, mapithas tahu mas makuang.*

*Samu* is said to assist and guide the Bunun in moving toward a good life and avoiding the bad.

From the Bunun perspective, *samu* were viewed in a positive way as the guidelines for a happy, prosperous life. If *samu* were not properly observed, the

violators would receive punishment from *hanitu* (spirits) or *dihanin* (sky) in the form of poverty, starvation, sickness, or death. Those involved in the adversity included not only the present family members but also future offspring or even the whole settlement. Because *samu* were closely related to the invisible spirits, from the Japanese period it was classified as an aspect of religion by researchers (Chiu 1966; Samaya 2008[1919]). In Sayama's book (2008[1919]), *Research Report on the Bunun*, he used the terms 'superstition' and 'taboo' interchangeably to refer to *samu*.

Pastor Hu invariably viewed the pre-Christian practices as superstitions and saw them from a negative perspective. In his memoir, he mentioned two Bunun pre-Christian religious practices and put them under the subtitle of 'The Selfishness of the Bunun'. One of them concerned the millet harvest ritual. After harvesting, when people were ready to store new millet in the granary, the family head would make a prayer like this: 'Oh millet! The millet of the whole settlement should listen to my words and come to my granary all together!' Pastor Hu commented, '[t]his not only reveals that their superstition is an unfulfillable superstition but also exposes their ignorance and selfishness' (1997[1984]:125-126). His understanding of the pre-Christian ritual as superstition makes him conclude, '[d]ue to superstition, the Bunun people fear to give assistance to others, and their lack of love makes them live in selfishness' (*ibid.*). Pastor Hu displayed comparatively little tolerance towards Bunun pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices and often condemned them wholesale as evil and backward. He regarded superstitions and taboos to be useless and ineffective – they neither assure good fortune nor prevent misfortune.

By ignoring the *samu*, Pastor Hu downplayed Bunun pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices in order to replace them with the new set. His attitude towards the pre-Christian Bunun culture can be clearly revealed through the local terms he chose or

did not choose in the process of Bible translation. The Ten Commandments for example, are a set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship which are seen by Presbyterians as guidelines of Christian morality and belief. Nowadays, the Bunun Presbyterians frequently recite them in vernacular during the Sunday service. According to the material I collected, the first translation of the Ten Commandments was on the second page of the first Bunun hymn book published in 1952, which was edited by Pastor Hu. The first Commandment was translated as:

*Kato liskaoni doma to Kamisama, kaupa dako.*

Do not believe in other deities, only me.

I heard from the Bunun evangelists they had suggested that Pastor Hu adopt the term *masamu* instead of *kato* in the translation. They proposed that the term *kato* is used in ordinary situations to ask someone not to do something. If a person does not obey the order, he or she may be scolded or punished by others. However, the term *masamu* comes from the root *samu* which has connection with spiritual powers. If someone does not observe *samu*, he would be punished by the invisible powers with serious consequences. However, the recommendation was rejected by Pastor Hu, saying the term *masamu* derives from the old Bunun pagan beliefs. He feared that old religious feelings would arise again with the use of old term.

From the Bunun perspective, Pastor Hu's misunderstanding of the term *samu* threatened the integrity of the Bunun identity. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan candidly points out that Pastor Hu's understanding of Bunun pre-Christian ideas and practices was incorrect and incomplete. Pastor Hu learned of Bunun traditions through reports written by Japanese scholars, which made him perceive the pre-Christian Bunun

culture as primitive, with childish superstitions or taboos. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recollected:

The relationship between us and Pastor Hu regarding Bible translation deteriorated sharply because of the controversial issue of *samu*. We, the Bunun people, opposed seeing *samu* treated as superstition. We proposed that this misunderstanding was the result of Japanese colonial education and domination. Nevertheless, Pastor Hu insisted that *samu* was equal to superstition. He told us that we could not have superstition in Christianity. We did not agree with him. We proposed that the Ten Commandments brought by Moses were in reality *samu* according to the Bunun's realisation. Pastor Hu could not accept our opinion. I told him, no family or group could be sustained without *samu*, or prescriptions, just as nowadays we could not move without traffic regulations. Traffic regulations are *samu* as well. We strongly contended that *samu* was not superstition. For example, we say: *masamu tanhai-iu* (It is forbidden to steal). Is this a superstition? Nevertheless, he did not listen to us.

Pastor Hu insisted on stamping out the term *samu* in the Bunun Bible. In his second version of the Bunun hymn book, issued in 1958, although the romanised Bunun script has been changed into phonetic symbols, Pastor Hu continued to use the term *kato* instead of *samu*. After a series of protests and ineffective negotiations, in the third version of the Bunun hymn book (published in 1975), which was edited by local evangelists, the term *masamu* was finally adopted.

*asa kasu tu liskada ku, masamu liska akia.*

You must believe in me, it is forbidden to believe in idols.

### Christian Sin: *dulus* or *inulivan*?

There is no local term for the Christian concept of sin. Local evangelists sought to find the closest local equivalent for the Christian concept of sin. They proposed using the term *dulus*. The Bunun perceived *dulus* as the punishment exacted by spiritual beings due to violation of *samu*. *Dulus* to the Bunun was breaking *samu*, such as stealing, adultery, violating marriage rules, or teasing people with disabilities. In some cases, even though the violator did not receive the deserved punishment at that immediate moment, or nobody knew what he had done in the first place, one day he would be disciplined by spiritual beings in terms of misfortune, sickness or poverty. *Dulus* was a single act made by a person but for serious cases such as murder, the punishment would infect (*ulaan*) family members or even future offspring. In pre-Christian times, only the most powerful spirit medium had the potency, imparted by the invisible spirits, to block the path and terminate sufferings, the Bunun say.

This shows that the local term *dulus* had no sense of the sinful nature of human beings as declared in Christian doctrines. Pastor Hu's negative view of the meaning of *samu* prompted him to reject the local evangelists' suggestion. As usual he viewed the idea of *dulus* as pagan superstition. In his memoir, he described a family who had lost three daughters within a year due to tuberculosis. People were fearful to approach this family in case they contracted 'bad luck' (*dulus*, in Pastor Hu's translation) for themselves and their families (1997[1984]:126-127). He pointed out that Christian sin is different from *dulus*. First, *dulus* would cause misfortunes to fall on other people, but Christian sin only focuses on the individual. Second, the local term *dulus* was entwined with a range of pre-Christian religious practices or ideas, such as *hanitu* and the spirit mediums, which were regarded as the major obstacles to evangelical work, and should be eradicated instantly.

These considerations prompted him to create a new word, *inulivan*, for this. The new word *inulivan* was coined from the noun root *uliva* meaning mis-step, the prefix *in-* indicates past tense, and the suffix *-an* indicates a noun as the object of an action. The verb *muliva* means doing wrong with minor negative consequences, such as going in the wrong direction. Pastor Hu's intention was to enlarge its semantic references.

However, his creation had an unexpected impact upon the Bunun culture as well as Christianity. Similar to the term *katu*, the term *inulivan* means minor or trivial wrongdoings and has no relationship with spiritual beings. I heard many comments from early local evangelists as well as Bunun elders, who suggested that the use of *inulivan* in the Bunun Bible or by the church congregation diminished the supreme status and seriousness of Christian teachings, and made it easier for adherents to offend against Christian doctrines. This also downgraded the status of spirituality in Bunun society.

### **God as Kamisama, Sangti, or Dihanin?**

Pastor Hu faced the daunting linguistic challenges confronted by Christian missionaries everywhere in the world: What was the supreme God to be called in a culture containing words only for good or bad spirits? As mentioned in previous sections, Pastor Hu perceived the Bunun pre-Christian religion as animistic (1997[1984]:177-182). He suggested that the Bunun had no term comparable to that of the Christian God. He first borrowed the Japanese term *Kamisama* as the term for God for the publication of the Gospel of Matthew in 1951. In the first Bunun catechism issued in 1960, he invented a new term *Sangti* to replace *Kamisama*. *Sangti* is a term borrowed from Mandarin Chinese literally meaning 'Emperor Above'. I quote two

items from the catechism concerning the meaning of God as a personalised Christian God. It shows that the term *Sangti* is not equal to *dihanin* in the eyes of Pastor Hu.

1. *dihanin, dalah, bunun mas kaupakaupa hai maisnasia min-aiza?*

Where do the sky, earth, humans, and everything come from?

*sias Sangti-a kaiuni. (kaiuni apav 1:1-27)*

They are created by *Sangti*. (Genesis 1:1-27)

2. *Sangti hai sima?*

Who is *Sangti*?

*sias dihanin dalah tu sasbinad daingaz, mataiklas daingaz, matamasaz daingaz, masmuav tu kapanun daingaz. (luma 11:33 ipisu 3:20)*

He is the supreme Lord of sky and earth, very intelligent, very powerful, and extremely extraordinary. (Romans 11:33; Ephesians 3:20)

The local evangelists fought against using either *kamisama* or *Sangti*. As described by Pastor Talima Nahaisulan:

*Kamisama* is a Japanese god. It is not in Taiwan right now. The Japanese took it back to Japan. So we must not bring it back to become our God. We, the Bunun people, have always paid our respects to *dihanin* from our ancient past. So we should take *dihanin* back now. Indeed, *dihanin* is our only God.

It is particularly noteworthy that Bunun seminary students and church ministers have been pursuing the academic comparison of the Bunun traditional religion with Christianity since the mid-1970s. Ming-wu Lin's study (1975), *A Comparative Study of the Bunun Monotheism and Christian Monotheism*, analyses the concept of *dihanin* from linguistic and cultural approaches and argues that the Bunun pre-Christian religion was monotheistic in nature. *Dihanin* is the creator God with a personalised

character. He contended that the Bunun pre-Christian religion was in no way animistic (1975:11). In Wu's publication, *A Study of the Aboriginal Peoples of Taiwan: the Development of Bunun Original Religion and Christianity* (1978), he refutes the earlier studies which had categorised Bunun ancestral religion under animism. Instead he argues that for the Bunun *dihanin* is the supreme God and his existence is abstract. He asserts, 'his [*dihanin*'s] power and existence is omnipresent just like the Christian God' (1978:23).

All these disputes between Pastor Hu and the local evangelists gradually undermined their relationship. Both parties did not want to make concessions in any form and this strong antagonism prevented them from cooperating. Finally, the local evangelists decided to withdraw collectively from the Bible translation committee to demonstrate their opposition. Because of this, the Bible's translation did not progress for several years, until the intervention of the Bible Society in Taiwan. As a compromise of sorts, Pastor Hu was deemed responsible for interpreting the Christian doctrines and the local evangelists regained their authority over Bunun language and culture.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate the importance of paying attention to the Bunun written language in reaching a much more thorough understanding of the process of Christian indigenisation among the Bunun people of eastern Taiwan. The myth of the loss of the written word was not just a legendary story that had happened in the ancient past, but a vital force that continued to shape the present. The Bunun saw the written words as distinctive of their past glory, empowering the Bunun to challenge the popular impressions of them as ignorant, backward people. When Christianity was

introduced to them, they responded very positively not only to the written materials but also to the image of Christ as the Word. For the Presbyterians, founded on the Protestant doctrine of the centrality of the Scriptures, ‘speech and writing was best thought of as a window to God’s word, transparent to its referent’ (Bowen 1998:178).

Through Christianity the Bunun again became familiar with their long-lost words, the sense of order, dignity, and of course their ethnic identity. The narrative of the ‘rediscovery’ of the written words prompted them to reinterpret their relationship with foreign Christianity. They proclaimed that, just like the written words, they had already had Christianity in their glorious past, but this had been lost on their way to the mountains. This convinced the Bunun that Christianity came from their cultural heritage and was not a foreign borrowing.

The restoration of Bunun identity was not achieved naturally through the ‘rediscovery’ of the written words. Instead it was a process of confrontation and negotiation. By examining the process of the Bunun Bible’s translation, it is shown that the Bunun sometimes allied with Presbyterian missionaries against the assimilationist policies launched by the state. However, the Bunun still had to negotiate the terms used in the translated Bible so as to better accommodate their sense of what the Christian message or their culture was all about, even when this sense differed radically from the doctrinal teachings of the foreign missionaries. In short, Christianity played an important role, not only as a buffer against official assimilation policies or the Han Chinese authorities, but also for Bunun to participate fully in the new world without sacrificing their identity.

The material presented in this chapter also challenges existing statements that attribute a minority people’s quest for writing or literacy to pragmatic economic

considerations. The Bunun case shows that literacy is not only a medium of communication or a tool to access sacred religious knowledge, but an ethnic marker related to power and identity. I suggest it is necessary to shift our perception of literacy from a neutral, technological perspective toward a broader view whereby social and political interactions determine the outcome.

Furthermore, most of the literature on literacy views human beings as basically passive objects who have been affected by literacy in ways they are neither fully aware of nor able to control. Rather than stress how literacy affects people, I take the opposite approach and examine how people manage literacy and how they construct their identity through literacy. By taking the active role of the Bunun people seriously, I focus on the prickly relationships between the Bunun people, the Presbyterian Church, and the Chinese Nationalist government. In the context of the Bible translation, the political and religious differences and the unequal power relationships of those who took part in the process should not necessarily lead us to portray a scenario divided into two clearly opposing camps, each neatly defined and homogeneous. In the Bunun case, I focus like Sanneh (2003) on the indigenous discovery of Christianity rather than the Christian discovery of the indigenous society.

It is clear that the Bunun pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices have been accommodated or appropriated in the process of Bible translation. For example, *dihanin* became the Heavenly God with a personalised character. Yet, as shown in this and the following chapter, the compatibility of Presbyterian doctrines and the Bunun pre-Christian practices continued to be controversial issues for public and private negotiations. I argue that an indigenised Christianity was developing among the Bunun closely linked to the Bunun Bible translation through the introduction of the written words and these written words become a crucial part of their ethnic identity.

# Chapter 5 Transforming Moral Relations with the Deceased

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Death, the cessation of all biological functions that sustain a living organism, is one of the most emotional moments in all human society. Although death is a universal phenomenon, ideas about death are culturally constructed. The Bunun ancestral mortuary practices were not complicated or elaborated upon symbolically, as illustrated in previous research (Chiu 1966; Huang 1988; Sayama 2008[1919]; Yang 2001). In the past, contacts between the deceased and the living were avoided. Burials were made hurriedly, and the deceased's spirits were immediately sent away to the afterworld for fear of their disturbing the living. The fear was due to the perception that the deceased's spirit remained near the corpse, and until it had left the community it would pose a threat to the living. The Bunun had a horror of corpses, but it was not a physical repugnance. They feared the corpse but buried it inside the house and lived with it. The Bunun perceived the deceased as biologically but not socially dead. The relationship of the deceased and the living, although transformed, still continued. In general, the fear of *hanitu* (spirits) pervaded the whole funeral process.

Christianity substantially changed Bunun ancestral mortuary ideas and practices. The fear of spirits was attenuated, and the distinction between good and bad deaths obliterated. At the moment of death, men and women went to comfort the bereaved, to cook meals for the mourners, or to clean the house of the deceased. In the evenings between the death and funeral, villagers gathered in the home of the bereaved to attend services or chant. At the funeral, the deceased was put into the coffin, Christian mortuary rituals were performed, and the corpse was buried at the cemetery.

There has long been a tendency to suggest that Taiwan indigenous ancestral rituals were replaced by Christian rituals at conversion (*cf.* Ho 1986; Hung 1973; Shih 1976; Sung 1963), in line with the replacement assumption. However, taking the Bunun mortuary practices for instance, the phenomena I observed in the field make this statement more complicated. The Bunun hold the conviction that the maintenance of balanced relationships between ancestral spirits and the living is crucial for their continuing well-being. The spirits of the deceased travel back and forth from the afterworld and communicate with the living in dreams. The villagers make offerings to feed the ancestral spirits from time to time, in hopes of fulfilling their moral obligations, or of pleasing and propitiating the spirits.

However, the form and meaning of mortuary practices give rise to hotly contested debates within the local Christian communities, between Presbyterian and Catholic villagers, Church officials and Christian villagers, and the old and new Presbyterian pastors. The Catholic rituals of prayers and chanting for the deceased are attacked by the Presbyterian villagers as fundamentally absurd and misguided. The practice of offering food to the deceased spirits by both Presbyterian and Catholic villagers is rejected by Church officials. The present Presbyterian pastor has urged Christian villagers to avoid all practices not prescribed by God in the Bible, whereas the retired Presbyterian pastor defends some ancestral practices, also on the basis of the Bible.

In order to understand these debates, it is necessary to delve into the assumptions held by each group. In this chapter, I examine the transformation of Bunun mortuary practices and suggest that the earlier form of Christian death ritual was the outcome of an appropriation of Christian emblems in a local cultural framework. The continued relationship between the deceased and the living was an important cultural value and obligation. However, the Presbyterian officials attempted to cut the close bond

between the deceased and the living. These prescriptions made villagers extremely anxious about their moral relations with the deceased spirits, which in turn impacted upon their practical well-being. I propose that although Christianity provided an alternative to restore balance between the dead and the living in the early stage of Christianisation, it fails to do so in contemporary circumstances. The Catholic and Presbyterian villagers have adapted to this quandary through distancing themselves from Christian teachings they have received. The different interpretations of death practices are legitimised by highlighting some, while downplaying other, aspects of Christian teachings. I argue that Christianity is not a static entity but is rather evolving in the new social context.

### **The Pre-Christian Bunun Ideas of Death**

Unlike other Austronesian-speaking populations with elaborate or complex burials designed to ensure the deceased will endure this most dangerous transition (Couderc and Sillander 2012; Hertz 1960), the pre-Christian Bunun funeral was relatively simple. The pre-Christian Bunun ideas of death were closely associated with their concept of spirit and personhood. As Chapter 1 explained, and as recapped briefly here, the Bunun perceived that a person had two spirits on their right and left shoulders. The spirit on the right was benevolent and the one on the left was malevolent. In addition people had *is-ang*, or soul which dwelled in the chest. At death, the benevolent and malevolent spirits vanished, while *is-ang* left the human body through the head and became a spirit (Huang 1988:102).

Exactly whose spirit could move to the afterworld and whose could not was not decided in advance, but determined in terms of the cause of death. A peaceful death, which was called a ‘good death’, resulted in the *is-ang* becoming a benevolent spirit;

while an accidental death would cause the *is-ang* to become a malevolent spirit, and was regarded as a 'bad death'. The Bunun perceived that the spirits of good deaths would move to the afterworld but the bad death spirits would become wandering spirits and were the main cause of sickness or misfortune (Chapter 1).

Subsequently, different mortuary practices were applied in accord with the different causes of death. Corpses of bad death were buried quickly or had soil dumped on them at the site of the accident. The burial was carried out by the deceased's family members. According to the elders, in some cases the spirit medium was requested to propitiate or exorcise the deceased's spirit at the place of death. Elders who witnessed the burial of bad death victims in the past reported that the body was treated roughly, like an animal. It was strictly forbidden to bring the corpse back to the settlement, because people feared the malicious spirit hovering near the body might also be brought back to the settlement.

Yang indicates that the bad death's burial was called *minkulali*, which means to throw away a torn piece of cloth. No mourning was held for those who died from bad deaths, except for the bereaved who had to rest at home for one day (2001:227). In Chiu's study (1966), he observed the Tannan Bunun greatly feared the spirits of bad deaths. Upon hearing the news, villagers had to consume all leftover food or wine instantly. Otherwise, these foods should be thrown away. Moreover, villagers extinguished stove fires and emptied the water jar in the house when hearing the shouts made by the people who had buried the body of a bad death victim as a signal of their return (*ibid*:74). Homeless as these spirits were, they entered a dreadful condition, lurking on the fringes of the settlement. Rejected by both the living and the ancestors, they became vindictive and were responsible for misfortunes, accidents and diseases on the earth.

However, the *is-ang* of the good deaths transformed into benevolent spirits and moved to the afterworld where they rejoined other deceased family members. As soon as a person's breath was gone, it was believed that the spirit of the deceased was going to leave the body, so the windows and door of the house were instantly shut. All family members stayed inside the house. They kept quiet and avoided crying to prevent the spirits of deceased from greedily claiming more of the living to join them. The body of the deceased was washed and dressed by family members. The corpse was positioned in a foetal position, attaching the knees to the chest by bending the legs. The position reminded them of the original position in which a person entered this world. Usually they did this before the person died, to make the work easier. Graves formerly were dug under the floor of house.<sup>17</sup> The intimate and continuing relationship between the dead and the living was assured in terms of the in-house burial. The dead and living occupied the same house spatially.

In Chiu's study (1966:73) of the Tannan Bunun in central Taiwan, the family head spoke to the deceased's spirit at the time of burial:

From now on, no more people will die in our family except this one. Although you have already passed away, we still wish for you to protect and bless us, give us a stable life and healthy bodies. While you were sick, we served you with food and medicine. We are extremely exhausted. You treated us well when you were alive, and we hope you will treat us well as usual, just as you were alive. Please protect and bless us.

The spirits of good death family members were perceived as protective beings. In Tongpu, the pregnant woman especially had to touch the body of the deceased family

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<sup>17</sup> According to Sayama (2008[1919]:145-147), there were some variations concerning the locality of grave among the Bunun. For instance, the Taki-bakha Bunun buried the deceased in the front yard; the Taki-vatan Bunun buried the dead outside but near the house and if the deceased had made a great contribution to the family or settlement, he or she would be buried near the entrance of the house. The Qatungulan Bunun buried the dead either inside or outside the house.

member and pray for the deceased's good spirit to protect the unborn (Huang1988:111). Those who had made major contributions to the community were buried near the door of the house so that their spirits could protect the livelihood of the family members (Huang 1995:71). Those 'living dead' remained quite significant in people's day-to-day lives. The Bunun believed that the spirits of the deceased had greater power and knowledge than the living, and were ready to call upon them to aid and protect the family in times of illness or hardship. They were active participants in their relationships with the living; failure to ensure the comfort of the deceased incurred displeasure, whereas correct propitiation would result in gifts of wealth, prosperity, and good health.

Nevertheless, the Bunun treated the deceased of good deaths differently, depending on their relationship to them. The Bunun feared the spirits of other people's ancestors even though they were good spirits. The entire community stopped working at the moment of hearing about the death. People believed that the spirit remained near the corpse and might haunt and harm the living. Thus, villagers with no kinship relation avoided having any contact with the deceased or with members of the bereaved family. Only the bereaved relatives were supposed to give support, as they believed the deceased's spirit would not harm his or her relatives (Chen 1961:144). In summary, the pre-Christian Bunun ideas of death demonstrate to the living that through the practice of mortuary rituals, the threatening spirits of the deceased have left the community, taking danger with them. As for the spirits of deceased family members, they remain close by and can be called upon to aid the living. The Bunun perceived that the maintenance of balance between ancestral spirits and the living was crucial for their practical welfare and indeed was also a moral obligation. To keep the

proper relationship with the deceased's spirits, offerings were required, especially at times of significant events such as marriage.

## **Burial at the Cemetery**

Bunun death practices began to undergo substantial changes under Japanese rule. The in-house burial which was a pervasive practice of many Taiwan Austronesian peoples was regarded as a backward custom by the Japanese authorities. For hygienic reasons, it was discouraged and later banned altogether. Instead, collective cemeteries were set up on the edges of settlements. According to official Japanese archives, between 1922 and 1926, the very first public cemeteries were constructed in fifteen different indigenous settlements (Hu 1996:113-114).

Among the Bunun, this injunction was not properly observed until they were relocated in new settlements. The collective cemetery was a necessary part in the layout of new settlements which had been planned in advance by the Japanese government. In Luntien and Hsiuluan, the collective cemeteries were set up after resettlement (Palalavi 2006), and villagers were forced to bury the deceased there. The elders recollected the corpses were stored inside large jars in a foetal position, with the knees drawn up tightly under the chin, as in the past. When the jar was on its way to the cemetery, people shut their doors and windows to avoid being disturbed by the deceased's spirit. After burial, only stones were put on the top of burial site to remind others that this place was already occupied. The graves were then obliterated. As time passed, it was difficult to identify the exact location of the deceased's grave.

The change of burial practices challenged the relationships between the deceased and the living. The deceased no longer cohabited with the living in the same house, and the living lost protection from ancestral spirits in terms of in-house burial. The

house also gradually lost its significant role as a ritual place in which the offerings to the deceased were made. In 1924, according to official Japanese documentation, a large outbreak of measles occurred in several Bunun settlements in central Taiwan. The local residents attributed this calamity to the change from in-house burial, which had displeased the ancestors' spirits (Hu 1996:115). On the other hand, the collective cemetery became the most forbidding of places for the Bunun, as people perceived that other people's ancestors were buried inside the cemetery. Consequently, there were many malicious spirits ready to attack whomever passed by. The villagers avoided approaching cemeteries as much as they could. When it was necessary to do so, they left a small piece of meat beside the cemetery as an offering to propitiate the spirits.

### **Christian Challenges and Their Consequences**

Although the Japanese had already introduced cemeteries, no new rituals accompanied this innovation, nor did the introduction of Shintoism near the end of the Japanese occupation bring the Bunun new funeral rites. As Pastor Hu observed, in the initial post-war period, the Bunun still practiced their traditional ways with regard to death. These ancestral mortuary practices were regarded as superstitious, ignorant and selfish customs by Pastor Hu. In his memoir, he wrote a chapter titled 'The Inspiring Power of Love', in which two cases of the pre-Christian mortuary practices were recorded. The first case is about the Bunun in-house burial custom. Pastor Hu wrote (1997[1984]:126):

When a person died, people of other families could not enter the bereaved family's home to worship or help them to carry out the funeral. This was perceived as taboo (*samo*) from the Bunun's perspective. As a result, they had no option but to bury the deceased inside their houses in the past.

It is clear that Pastor Hu mistakenly attributed the cause of in-house burial to the Bunun's overwhelming fear of the spirits of the deceased. Once again, he challenged the pre-Christian Bunun mortuary ideas and viewed them as superstitious in nature. Despite this misunderstanding, Pastor Hu had correctly observed the fact that the Bunun ancestral burial practices had a close relationship with the idea of spirits.

Christian rituals began to penetrate the Bunun communities following their gradual acceptance of Christianity at the end of the 1940s. It was not as easy to introduce Christian mortuary rituals among the Bunun as people generally thought, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan stressed. Christian funerals met with much opposition and resistance at the beginning, according to the recollection of Pastor Talima Nahaisulan. In Luntien, the first Christian funeral occurred in 1950 when a baptised man died from illness. There were only a dozen adherents in Luntien at that time. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan encouraged the early converts to follow the Christian way and disregard ancestral injunctions of death. He led these Christians to visit and assist the bereaved family. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan spoke to me candidly:

Even though Christianity teaches us that the deceased's spirit has left body instantly and proceeds to heaven at the moment of death, we still felt unsettling horror the first time. We still feared the spirits of the deceased would hover around the body and prepare to harass us.

Instead of ignoring the mentality of the early Christians, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan offered an alternative perception to empower the new converts to overcome their fear. He told the followers:

After believing in Jesus Christ, we are family. Jesus Christ is the head of family. The Han Chinese, the Westerners, as well as the Bunun, whoever believes in Jesus are within Jesus' family. Since this is so, we don't need to fear the spirits of our family members.

It is particularly noteworthy that Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's narrative was based on Christian teaching as well as the pre-Christian Bunun beliefs. On the one hand, the idea that Christian believers belong to God's family is based on the New Testament (Ephesians 2:19). Thus, according to the pre-Christian Bunun mortuary concept, they convinced converts that the spirits of the deceased would not harm their family. These early Christian converts visited the home of the bereaved, sat with them, said prayers and sang hymns. In the eyes of the non-Christian villagers, these Christian behaviours violated ancestral stipulations, and they thought these Christians would be punished by spirits. That is, the adversity experienced by the bereaved might pass to these offenders, and the villagers waited for the outcome. Nevertheless, the Christians' first funeral trial succeeded. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan spoke with relief to me, 'Thank God, because of His almighty power, nothing bad happened to us afterwards. The positive experiment strengthened our faith in following Christian ways'.

At roughly the same time, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan began to challenge the distinctions between good and bad deaths, that is to say the idea of spirits. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recollected, one day an unconverted man fell from a cliff and died on his hunting trip in the mountains. As a bad death, the deceased was hastily buried on the spot by his family, before Pastor Talima Nahaisulan could do anything. The next death was a bad death as well, when another man died accidentally during a hunting trip. After his body was recovered, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan persuaded the family, who had become Christians, to bring the body back to the settlement and bury the corpse properly in the cemetery. He explained to the bereaved that death is an

inevitable fact of life, and emphasised that all deaths are the same in accord with the Christian teachings. There is no distinction between good or bad deaths in Christianity because everyone is moving toward death from the day of birth. The spirit of the bad death proceeds to its new life in heaven, just like the spirit of good death.

Expanding on this, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan asserted that the pre-Christian Bunun idea of bad death was misleading. In the past, the Bunun perceived that a person's life was made by *dihanin* (the sky). Thus, the spirits of bad death had been abandoned by *dihanin* as they were excluded from reuniting with other ancestral spirits in the afterlife. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan refuted this by citing verses in the Bible (Psalm 72:14; John 3:16) to support his statement. He pronounced that every person's life is precious in God's sight. More to the point, by explaining the relationship between humans and God as children and Father he contended that the Heavenly Father loves all his children, always. Although accidents do happen sometimes, humans must accept them because they are the unfathomable will of God. Everything is under God's good plan, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan emphasised.

Even though the bereaved had accepted Christianity, they feared bringing the body back to the settlement, let alone their house. Thus Pastor Talima Nahaisulan suggested that the bereaved place the deceased's body in the church and held the funeral there. This suggestion was approved, as it freed the bereaved from being attacked by the spirit of the bad death. Subsequently, the corpse was brought to the church where a Christian funeral service was held and the body buried in the cemetery on the same day. From the other villagers' perspective, the bereaved family's innovation was crazy and offensive in dealing with the body of a bad death victim and put not only themselves, but the whole settlement, under the threat of adversity. 'Thank God, fortunately,

nothing bad happened to us or the rest of the settlement', Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recalled with relief.

Consequently, people were brave enough to bring the corpses of bad death victims back home, not to be placed inside the house but placed in the front yard only. Cina Aping told me she was the first person in Luntien to place the body of a bad death victim inside the house. In the late 1980s her beloved son drowned in a river. His body was brought home, put into a wooden coffin and placed in the front yard. One day, a female villager came to tell Cina Aping that she had a dream the night before. In the dream, she saw Cina Aping's deceased son walking back and forth in front of the door of his house. It seemed that he was looking forward to entering the house but could not get in. At first, Cina Aping decided to ignore this dream, in order not to violate the stipulations. But, the woman came to see her again the next day, because the same dream had recurred. To the Bunun, dreaming is a special event, and ancestors are the unsolicited visitors in dreams, which are channels for the spirits to bring messages to the living. If the spirit's requests are not carried out, the living will have the same dreams repeatedly. These repeated dreams prompted Cina Aping to disregard the ancestral funeral rules, so she tore down the front door and allowed the corpse of her beloved son to move inside the house before burial. After that, the dream did not return. Perhaps the most important aspect of such stories is to demonstrate that Christianity was not brought to the Bunun as a wholesale package, but instead the Christian mortuary practices were introduced by challenging the ancestral burial practices, piece by piece, in a trial and error process.

The introduction of Christian mortuary rituals had a great impact on Bunun social life. The Bunun are now willing to visit and assist the bereaved, as they think they are one family under the church. This perception of the church as family exempts them

from being assaulted by the spirits of dead with no kin relationship. Moreover, the church as an ‘imaginary’ family is confirmed through the ritual sharing of food, the Holy Communion.

The obliteration of the distinction of good and bad deaths reshuffled Bunun’s pre-Christian concept of spirits. Christianity offered a new way to construct bonds with the spirits of bad deaths, regarded as evil wandering spirits in pre-Christian times. The Bunun perceive that the souls of all deceased persons will return to God. The deceased of both good and bad deaths are now seen as ancestors, regardless of their causes of death. The pre-Christian ideas of *hanitu* have been narrowed down to mean evil spirit forces only, not intrinsic parts of the human beings as illustrated in Mabuchi (1952[1951]) and Huang’s studies (1988, 1992).

I found that the transformation of Bunun death ritual is best understood as a local process of selecting ritual elements from a Christian repertoire that are compatible with Bunun cultural values. In this case, it is the moral reciprocity between the dead and the living. In the section that follows, by describing contemporary burial practices, I delineate the local villagers’ experimentation, struggle, negotiation, promises and debate.

## **A Contemporary Funeral**

It was a hot June night in 2010 when a young Bunun man in his mid-twenties died in a drunk driving accident on his way home late at night. The young man was my friend in Luntien and we had been acquainted with each other for over a decade. He was taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital, a half hour’s drive away, for emergency treatment. When the accident was reported to his family, the church pastor was the first person they informed. After receiving the call from the family, the pastor went directly

to the hospital. At such a critical moment, villagers believe that the prayer made by pastor beside the patient is extremely crucial for the patient's survival. However, the pastor saw it from a different point of view. He thought that what he was doing was to accompany and console the family.

The news of this accident quickly spread, not only through the blare of ambulance sirens so deep in the night, but also through the email sent by the pastor of the Luntien Presbyterian Church. In the email, the pastor asked the Church members to pray for the young man. However, the young man's serious head injury prevented any possibility of recovery, and he died the next morning.

After hearing the news of the young man's death, the Youth Fellowship head appealed to those members who would be free in the morning to clean the living room of the bereaved family before the arrival of the body. Relatives and affines of the bereaved family, as well as some villagers, contributed rice, meat, vegetables and drinks as refreshments for the people who attended the evening service and the wake. In the Luntien Presbyterian Church, when a member has died, from the day of death until burial regular evening gatherings are cancelled. Instead, people gather together in the home of the bereaved family to hold services every evening. This is called the Comforting Service, which, according to the pastor, aims to comfort the broken hearts of the bereaved family rather than the soul of the dead.

At half past seven the first evening, most of the Presbyterian members including the children had already gathered in the front yard of the bereaved family's house. People remained silent and did not speak with each other. They quietly waited for the arrival of the corpse. After a long wait, the ambulance arrived at last, and the deceased was carried on a stretcher directly to his house, with the help of the funeral parlour

staff. The corpse was put on the ground, then the pastor called the church elders and bereaved family members inside the house. They all stood around the corpse while the pastor made a short prayer to God. In the prayer, he asked God to accept the soul of this young man and to show His mercy in comforting the broken hearts of the bereaved. After prayer, the body was moved into a refrigerator in the living room. The entrance of the house was covered with a white cloth with a red cross on it.

A table was set at the end of the refrigerator and a picture of the deceased was put on it. The Bible was the only other thing put on the table. This was a demonstration of the deceased's faith. In other cases, I observed that bereaved Catholics arranged an incense pot, a pair of candles, flowers, and food on the table in front of the deceased's picture. The Catholic villagers maintained that lighting candles was meant to kindle a light for the deceased in his or her journey to the afterworld, and food was for consumption during the journey.

Actually, both Catholic and Presbyterian officials strongly deny the dead are able to benefit from food provided by the living, but Catholic officials allow followers to offer food to the dead because it is the Bunun way of caring for the dead. The food offered represents the care of the living for the departed. Although Catholic officials have proposed that offering food to the dead is symbolic, the Catholic Bunun villagers perceive the dead as actually needing and consuming the food. Feeding the dead is a way for the living to look after them. They also pointed out that feeding the deceased is the primary distinction between Presbyterians and Catholics in Luntien. The Catholic villagers often pity the deceased of the Presbyterians, because the Presbyterians are not allowed to give food to their ancestors. As a result, many Catholic villagers have stated, 'their [Presbyterians'] deceased must be very hungry'.

As everything was settling down, the service began. The first song was *Amazing Grace*, which was chosen by the pastor. He intended to show that everything is in God's good plan, including this young man's death. After singing, the pastor led mourners to read the gospel of Matthew 25: 23: His lord said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord'. The pastor explained that it does not matter whether a person's life is long or short, however it does matter whether he or she is faithful to God. He continued to say that, as Christians, we believe that we will meet some day in Heaven, and will be resurrected on the last day. Therefore, death is not a horrible matter. After the service, food and drink were distributed to the mourners. One church elder made the point to me: 'For us, as Christians, the purpose of a service like this is to comfort the bereaved. We perceive that people can do nothing for the deceased because he or she has left the world and gone to Heaven'.

According to the teachings of the Presbyterian pastor, death occurs in an instant. A person's soul, or *is-ang*, leaves the body and moves to Heaven at the moment of death. He taught the Presbyterian members that humans live in this world as guests, in transit, but the Christians' permanent home and final goal is to return to the Father's side. The idea of immediate transformation into the next world finds support in the words attributed to Jesus: 'Today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23: 43). Such an understanding of death is shared with the Catholic villagers. They perceive that death is the moment in which the believers will meet God in Paradise, where they will share his peace and mercy.

The Presbyterian pastor and church elders held a short meeting with the bereaved family after the service, in which some details of the funeral were decided. In Luntien, the funeral is supposed to be held within a short time in order not to aggravate the

financial and physical burdens of the bereaved. The only reason for the three to five days' delay between the death and the burial is to allow material preparations to be made and to summon relatives and friends who would like one last look at the face of the deceased. Viewing of the deceased's body takes place through a glass window in the refrigerator that exposes only the face. When the guests came, they were guided by the bereaved family to view the deceased. I observed that family members would call the deceased by name first, and then announce the visitors' names to the deceased. Sometimes the deceased was asked not to bother the visitors and make them sick. When viewing the face of deceased, in most cases visitors spoke to the deceased face to face in a gentle voice, wishing him a smooth journey to the afterworld and reminding him not to ignore his family, especially his parents.

In the evening before the burial, the Waking Service was held. The Presbyterian as well as the Catholic villagers all attended, especially those who unable to attend the funeral service next morning. The Waking Service was hosted by a church elder. He cited the verse from Revelations 21: 4, 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away'. Clearly the verse was aimed at comforting the bereaved rather than the deceased.

After the service, a short film made by the Youth Fellowship as a brief review of the young man's life was planned but the projector did not work until the arrival of the deceased's grandmother, who lived in another settlement. I heard many villagers gossip that the electronic device had been interfered with by the deceased's spirit because he was looking forward to seeing his grandmother before the film played.

The funeral was performed early in the morning, because many mourners needed to go to work on that day. The term 'Resting Service' is commonly used in the Luntien Presbyterian Church instead of the 'Funeral Service'. For the Bunun Presbyterians, death means a person has finished his or her works on the earth and rests in the hand of God. In the early morning, the body was moved out of the refrigerator and placed in the coffin. The pastor presided over a short service with the church elders and bereaved family members inside the house. Then the coffin was moved out of the house, reopened, and placed in the front of the temporary marquees made of steel poles and canvas, which had been constructed the previous day in the front yard of the bereaved family's house as the venue for the funeral service.

At seven thirty, the resting service was held by a church elder. When the resting service was finished, it was the time for the mourners to say their farewells to the deceased. They formed one line to come up to the front to the open coffin. First came the church elders and deacons, then the mourners, and the bereaved family was last. The occasion is one of emotional climax. I observed that many people spoke farewell remarks to the deceased, especially the deceased's aunty. She called the deceased's name, spoke to him and reminded him to look after his mother and family. All the mourners managed to control their emotions in order not to express their extreme grief, even the closest kin. The pastor asserted, according to Christian teachings, the deceased's spirit had gone to heaven. It is unnecessary, he said, to sorrow as people will see each other again someday in Heaven.

The coffin was closed by the church elders. Relatives and friends of the deceased carried the coffin to the house entrance and placed it in the crematorium hearth.<sup>18</sup> I sat

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<sup>18</sup> The adoption of cremation in Luntien and Hsiuluan is an increasing trend. However, many elders described to me that they are reluctant to practice cremation after death. They compare the fire in the crematorium with the fires of Hell. They perceive cremation as a terrifying torture after death and are

beside the coffin with the deceased's siblings in the hearse. The deceased's siblings called the deceased's name and reminded his spirit to follow us whenever we crossed a bridge on the way to the crematorium.

At the crematorium the coffin was placed on the platform and the pastor hosted a brief service called the Crematory Service. The deceased's siblings ceremonially ignited the fire and called the deceased's spirit to depart instantly as the coffin and corpse were consumed by the flames. When the cremation was finished, the deceased's siblings collected the ashes into an urn, and the urn was installed in the public Columbarium.

On the evening of the burial, the Funeral-Lifting Service was held at the bereaved family's house. Only members of the Luntien Presbyterian Church attended. The service marked the end of the funeral and reintegrated the survivors into the ordinary routines of life. It also symbolised that the church was returning to its regular routines. The pastor gave a short sermon at the service to comfort the bereaved. After the service, the church treasurer gave the money-gift collected from the Presbyterian family as a whole to the bereaved family. This symbolised that the church members all belong to God's family.

On the fortieth day after death, the Memorial Service was performed in the Luntien Presbyterian Church.<sup>19</sup> The fortieth day has special significance for the Luntien Presbyterians, because Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God on the fortieth day after crucifixion. The aims of the Memorial Service are twofold, the Presbyterian pastor asserted. The first is to commemorate the beautiful

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convinced their souls would be burnt to nothing by the fire.

<sup>19</sup> The fortieth-day service can be held either in the church or at the cemetery. In this case, because the cinerary urn was installed in a public Columbarium beyond the settlement, the service was held in church instead.

faith of the deceased; the second is to comfort the bereaved. The whole funeral ended with the fortieth day's service.

The Presbyterian pastor asserted that death is a one-way journey from the earth to Heaven with no return. It can also be observed that contemporary Presbyterian forms of funeral and post-funeral rituals are life-focused, aiming to console the bereaved rather than assist the dead. However, in effect, the interactions between the living and the deceased during the funeral show that the journey of the deceased is cyclical, not linear. The villagers perceive that the deceased's spirit still lingers in this world until the fortieth day. Thus, people spoke or prayed to the deceased spirit from beside the coffin. In addition, the villagers hold the conviction that the deceased's spirit travels to and from the afterworld and can protect or bless the family. These views are shared by both Presbyterian and Catholic villagers. The maintenance of relations with the ancestral spirits presented a radical challenge to the teachings of Christianity. The debates between Christian officials and the Christian believers are about the morality of how the relationships between the living and the deceased can be maintained.

### **The Debate Concerning Death Practices**

The contemporary burial practice is fraught with ambiguity. The villagers raised the questions: Can the deceased spirits journey to and from the afterworld? Can ancestral spirits aid the living in times of illness or other need? Can the living assist the dead, and how?

Such concerns have become the basis for major debates within the local community recently. The Presbyterian villagers point out that this stems from the arrival of the new pastor. On 23 June, 2001 Pastor Talima Nahaisulan officially retired from his office as the resident pastor of the Luntien Presbyterian Church, where he had

served for more than half a century. He was already seventy years old and retired in accordance with the Presbyterian Church's policy. The new pastor, Taupas Tanapima, was appointed on 4 May, 2002. He was still in his forties, born into a Christian family and with a degree from the Yu-shan Theological College and Seminary far from his settlement. There he had come into contact with western missionaries, teachers and other indigenous students from other parts of Taiwan. He learnt 'traditional' Presbyterian theology that stressed returning to the Bible and removing pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices.

The new pastor urged the Presbyterian members to avoid all practices that were not specifically prescribed by God in the Bible. His teachings contradicted those of the retired pastor. The old pastor, as well as most villagers, began to defend themselves by claiming that what they did was in accord with the Bible. In addition, the debates concerning death also related to the differences between the Catholics and the Presbyterians. In the section that follows, three debates about death are analysed, between the Catholic and Presbyterian villagers, the Presbyterian officials and their followers, and the new and old Presbyterian pastors.

### *Death as a Cyclical Journey*

Death rituals frequently feature images of journeys to the new worlds, as proposed by Bloch and Parry (1982), but the Presbyterian officials and their followers have an internal debate regarding the nature of the journey as being linear or cyclical. Most people I interviewed asserted that death is in fact a cyclical journey, in contrast to the Christian teachings.

The Bunun perceive that when a person is about to die, he or she breathes heavily. This means the person's soul will soon embark on its journey to the places where he or

she once stayed. After he or she finishes the whole journey, his or her soul will return to the body and announce: 'I am going to leave'. Villagers suggest that, since death is a round trip, people will say 'I am going to leave' rather than 'I am going to die'. The deceased spirit is ready to begin a new journey after biological death. After death, the spirit of deceased leaves the body and informs the living friends or relatives by deliberately making noise in their homes or by making an appearance without speaking. The Bunun believe that, during the period prior to the fortieth day, the spirits of the dead wander in and out of their former residences, remaining in or near the community. After the fortieth day, the soul is said to have left for the afterworld. Although the deceased's spirits have moved to the afterworld, they are still active participants in family affairs, even trivial ones. The interaction between the living and the dead is manifested in dreams. In short, the Bunun perceive that the deceased's spirit moves to and from the afterlife. This perception is shared by the both Catholic and Presbyterian villagers.

The present Presbyterian pastor, by contrast, removed spirits of the deceased from this world entirely. He attacked their interpretation as fundamentally misguided, and asserted that when a person dies, the spirit goes to the next world instantly and never returns. The passage of the soul is a linear journey, according to his perspective. Furthermore, he has rejected the perception that the living can communicate with the dead in dreams. Since the deceased's spirit never returns, the present Presbyterian pastor has admonished his followers that the spirits they meet in dreams in the images of the deceased are in fact evil spirits sent by Satan. He asks the Presbyterian villagers to ignore the spirits in dreams because these evil spirits are enticing the living to do bad things. He advises that believers should follow only the spirits in dreams who appear in the image of biblical spiritual beings, such as angels or Jesus.

The pastor's warnings make the Bunun extremely uneasy and confused regarding communication with the ancestral spirits. The Bunun people hold onto the belief that deceased family members will come to the bedside to greet and accompany the patient when he or she is about to die. In short, the Bunun perceive the relationship between the living and the dead continues regardless of biological death, whereas the new pastor has attempted to cut the bonds between them, threatening the relationship that is crucial for people's practical well-being.

### *The Living Aid the Deceased; the Deceased Aid the Living*

The second practice under debate is about the relationship between the living and the deceased. The Catholic villagers perceive the deceased are utterly dependent on the living for rituals that guarantee their welfare. The deceased's spirit goes to an immediate existence called purgatory soon after death. A female Bunun catechist explained that except for the very few who are so good as to rise directly to Heaven or so bad as to fall directly into Hell, most of the deceased's spirits go to purgatory. In purgatory, the spirits are cleansed of their sins through suffering, to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven. If, at this liminal stage, there is no one to produce merits on their behalf, the spirits are bound to suffer torment.

The Catholic villagers perceive that the relatives and friends of the deceased are under a moral obligation to move the deceased's spirit along through purgatory into Paradise. The Catholic officials conceptualise the benefits that prayers, service, or indulgences may bring their beloved in purgatory, which explains the Catholic chanting sessions that take place nightly at the deceased's house until the funeral. The attendees recite the rosary under the leadership of a priest, nun or catechist through whom the merit of the verses is channelled to the deceased. The rosary prayer is an act

of devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus. The Catholic villagers believe that by reciting the rosary they invoke Mary to generate and transmit merit to Jesus for the deceased. The chanting session is seen by Catholic villagers as a crucial part of the funeral. The Catholic villagers also claim that if the deceased shows a bad or angry face to the living in dreams, people should recite the rosary at home, or have masses for the deceased, to relieve their sufferings.



Figure 7 Catholic villagers recited the rosary under the leadership of a Bunun nun

In addition to that, the Luntien Catholic Church celebrates All Soul's Day (or the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed) in November. The Catholic villagers

recall that in the past they gathered at the cemetery, recited verses and prayed for the dead on All Soul's Day. The prayer went:

Merciful Father,

Hear our prayer.

Please pity all our departed brothers and sisters who are resting with the ardent hope of resurrection.

And pity our ancestors and all the departed,

That they may be made worthy to behold Thee face to face in Thy glory.

Merciful Father,

We pray especially for the dead,

Make them share the triumph of Christ,

Make them go to Heaven soon, to behold Thy face and enjoy the everlasting joy.

After praying, the priest sprinkled the holy water on the gravestone of deceased believers. As the French priest has aged, the ritual has been performed in the church in recent years. On that day, the Catholic villagers bring the deceased's picture to the church and the priest sprinkles the holy water on the pictures one by one.

In support of the Catholic ways of dealing with the deceased spirits, one female Catholic catechist cited a verse in the New Testament: 'And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it' (I Corinthians 12:26). She maintained: 'Since this is so, we can pray for each other and help each other. And we can pray for the departed, at the same time, the saints' spirits in heaven will pray for us'. In her account, the relationships of the living and the deceased are like a partnership. They are a network of people helping each other through prayer.

Bowen has rightly proposed, '[d]ebates about death are often debates about the living, about individual responsibility, the nature of the collectivity vis-à-vis the individual, and the sources of life and fertility' (1998:66). The Bunun Catholics' perception of accumulating or passing on merit for the dead generated by the living was rejected by Presbyterian villagers. They assert that one's ultimate destination is determined by one's own deeds while alive. Thus, prayer for the dead, in coming too late, is useless and misguided. For Presbyterians, destiny is determined solely by the faith of the individual and the dead are believed to be in no need of such prayer. They have rejected the entire system of merit and embraced instead the notion of salvation by grace, given by God alone.

Even though the Presbyterian Church denies the living are able to do anything for the benefit of the deceased, both the Presbyterian as well as Catholic villagers affirm the importance of maintaining relationships with the deceased. They are convinced that the living and the deceased continue to have a lot to say and do for each other after death. The continuing relationship needs to be strengthened through repeated reminders of the living asking the dead to look after their family during the funeral, and the offerings of food in return.

In practice, these actions of aid for the deceased are not only morally immediate but are also part of an ongoing reciprocity of aid between the living and the dead. Ancestors can be called on to help their descendants in times of illness or misfortune. I never heard the Bunun question the importance of maintaining relationships with ancestral spirits. Although the present Presbyterian pastor has tried to stop people speaking to the deceased at funerals, these instructions, advice, and warnings have proven ineffectual in a society where the care for the dead is a moral obligation of the living.

## *Feeding the Deceased*

The third practice under debate concerns making material offerings to the deceased.

Tomb Sweeping Day is a public holiday in Taiwan, which according to Han Chinese custom, is the time for cleaning the grave site, pruning shrubbery and weeding, burning incense, and offering food to the ancestral spirits at the cemetery. At the end of a Sunday service before Tomb Sweeping Day, the Presbyterian pastor urged church members to refrain from making offerings to the deceased on that day:

Tomb Sweeping Day is approaching. I am here to remind all of you, my brothers and sisters, that we as Christians pay much attention to the obedient behaviour towards our parents while they are alive rather than making offerings to them when they have passed away. Don't bring outsiders' customs into our community. The outsiders worship the dead by giving offerings such as wine, meat and rice. This is not Christians' way of doing things. Regarding the ancestors, it is important to be dutiful while they are alive. How can the deceased eat the food provided by the living? It is useless to give chicken drumsticks as offerings. They will ultimately be eaten by the living.

In the pastor's narrative, he criticised the practice of offering food to the dead from a common-sense perspective, stating flatly that the practice is absurd. On the other hand, the pastor's remarks also pointed out that making offering to the dead is common in the local community. He attributed it to the negative influence from outside, including the Han Chinese.

On Tomb Sweeping Day, Catholic villagers carry cooked pork, chicken, wine, rice and/or fruit to the cemetery, and place them on the ground in front of the tombstone of the deceased as an offering, just like the Han Chinese. They burn incenses, candles and

paper money<sup>20</sup> for the dead. However, the Presbyterian villagers have forbidden themselves to make material offerings to the deceased, except for flowers. They visit the cemetery, taking flowers to decorate the graves of their loved ones, but no food is involved. They clean the graves first and pray to God or recite the Lord's Prayer together. They assert that Christians should commemorate but not worship ancestors. The visit to ancestors' graves confirms the living's relationship with the deceased. Married women not only participate in their husbands' but also their natal families' tomb-sweeping ritual. Villagers suggest that the grave is the deceased's house. As descendants, the living visit and clean their graves just as they would clean their houses in this world.

Actually, the Presbyterian villagers seldom speak about the ancestors' spirits in public. It seems that the ancestral spirits have been uprooted from their daily lives entirely. One night, I went to visit Cina Isuz, the mother of my old friend in Luntien. Her husband passed away several years ago. I did not plan to conduct an interview in any form but to express my deepest condolences for the loss of her husband, who treated me kindly in the past. During our conversation, unexpectedly, she told me of a dream she had after her husband's funeral.

One night, I met my husband in a dream. This was the first time I met him after his death. He took me out of the house, pointed to the wet rice fields in the remote distance and said: 'Isuz, you see, we have a plenty of property'. Subsequently, he led me to stand in front of the door of a house. He opened the door. To my surprise, I saw tons of rice inside. He turned his face to me and said: 'Isuz, I am so hungry. I have nothing to eat. I would like to cross the bridge but have no money'.

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<sup>20</sup> Paper money, also known as spirit money or ghost money, is sheets of paper used as offerings for the deceased. This is a popular practice in Chinese folk religion. Paper money has been said to be given for the purpose of enabling those departed to have money to buy what they need or want in the afterlife.

The next day, I went to see my Cina Pailung to ask her to interpret my dream. Cina Pailung told me straightaway: 'The reason your husband is hungry is because of you. You are a Christian and you haven't fed him. Christians don't make offerings to the deceased, and this makes them hungry'. She told me, 'After dark, take a bowl of rice with other food, call your husband's name and feed him'. I did it secretly at the rear door of my house. I also bought paper money from the market printed like NT dollars and burned them for him, too.

This was the first time I realised that the local Presbyterians still make offerings to the deceased. The longer I stayed, the more information I discovered in regard to this practice. Most villagers offered food for the dead, especially during significant events such as marriage or the dedication of a new house. The deceased are invited to come and witness these important events. They receive food and drinks put on the ground and are sent away with a blessing. In addition, I was told that if the dead show bad or angry faces to the living in dreams, giving offerings either on the grave or at home is a way to propitiate them. But, I observed that for the Presbyterians, offerings to the ancestral spirits could only be made in secret. According to the Presbyterian pastor, the living should pay respects to and commemorate their deceased, which is called 'ancestor-veneration' but they are not allowed to make offerings to the dead, which is seen as 'ancestor-worship', or pagan Bunun practice.

However, the Presbyterian villagers are much confused by the distinction of ancestor-worship and ancestor-veneration. Catholic villagers are also prohibited from making sacrifices to their dead. For them, the care of dead can only be displayed by providing material offerings. The Bunun began to wonder whether feeding the deceased is compatible with Christian faith or if it might represent a failure of

Christian faith and their weak belief in the Christian God. I (CWF) brought this question to Pastor Talima Nahaisulan (TN), the retired pastor, for further explanation.

CWF: Did the Bunun worship their ancestors in the past?

TN: We Bunun people merely *pakaun hanitu*, but did not worship the ancestors. The term *pakaun hanitu* means feeding the spirits. The Bunun did and continue to provide offerings for the deceased. But, we don't worship the *hanitu* or ancestors like you Han people do.

CWF: Do the Bunun still make offerings to their ancestors today? Does the church allow you to do so?

TN: In my opinion, the Bunun ancestral practice, *pakaun hanitu*, is allowed in Christianity. Every person is born and brought up by his or her parents. Thus, dutiful behaviour toward one's parents is a moral obligation. We have the same principles as in the Ten Commandments.

When parents are alive, we offer them food and care. When they pass away, we feed them with food as usual. This is the true meaning of *pakaun hanitu*. This is a way of showing care for the dead. This moral stipulation is supported by Christianity as well. As a result, I don't see any conflict between them.

The dialogue shows Pastor Talima Nahaisulan asserting that the Bunun care for their dead by offering them food. After death, people's relations with the deceased continue. Respect or care would more accurately describe what actually takes place. Moreover, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan concludes that the act of feeding the dead would not in itself contradict the second commandment of the Ten Commandments. He suggested that these words, 'Honour your father and your mother' (Exodus 20:12) are far more acceptable than worship.

It is particularly noteworthy that Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's statement in regard to ancestral spirits contradicts the present pastor's teachings. For Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, as well as most Presbyterian villagers, feeding the dead is a crucial way to care for the deceased and is a moral obligation. It provides a way to maintain balance between the dead and the living, and results in the present well-being of the living. However, the present pastor sought to shift people's moral focus from the deceased to the bereaved. He emphasised the plight of the bereaved rather than the need of the deceased for help. He also stressed the absolute and final nature of death and the consequent impossibility of continued communications and exchanges with the dead person.

Both the new and old Presbyterian pastors attempted to support their respective statements by citing verses in the Bible, but they did it differently. The new pastor urged Christians to avoid all practices that were not specifically prescribed by God in the Bible. The old pastor argued that it was not necessary to limit our behaviour by the exact words in the Bible. On the contrary, we should discover the basic principles behind the words of the Bible and fulfil them in traditional ways. The differences between the two religious practices reveal their respective concerns in social life. The old Presbyterian pastor and most villagers hold on to the conviction that the maintenance of relationships between the deceased and the living is crucial for their present well-being. The new pastor has other concerns. He suggested that modern Bunun Christians should release themselves from such outdated bonds.

## **Conclusion**

In Yang's seminal paper 'Death, Emotions, and Social Change among the Bunun of Taiwan' examining the transformation of Bunun death rituals in the historical process,

she argued that, '[a]lthough the Bunun exhibit the “flat”, suppressed and low-profile sorrow emotions toward death in Christian funerals, the idea of afterlife and *hanitu* have not undergone remarkable changes during the Christianisation of funerals' (2007:56). My study expands upon that insight and shows that the accommodations of Christian and Bunun ancestral ideas of death vary historically, in effect.

This chapter points out, in the initial period of evangelisation, how closely the Bunun's expectations of Christianity mirror their pre-Christian indigenous views of relationships with the spirits of ancestors. In the early contact period, Christianity provided a new alternative to restore balance between the deceased's spirits and the living which had been destroyed by colonial authorities, thereby guaranteeing success and well-being. It is the Bunun idea of spirits, as well as the proper relationship between the dead and the living, that have decided the form and meaning of the Christian death rituals they have appropriated.

It goes without saying that the Bunun ancestral death practices have changed substantially after their acceptance of Christianity. Prior distinctions between good and bad deaths have broken down, coinciding with the declining power of *hanitu*, the spirits. Christian burial rites are given to all Christians, regardless of good or bad deaths. Christian mortuary practices were adopted in accord with the Bunun cultural value highlighting the balanced relationship between the dead and the living. The Bunun hold onto the conviction that the maintenance of balance between ancestral spirits and the living is crucial for their practical welfare. In addition, there is a moral imperative to care for the deceased. Catholic and Presbyterians have integrated this balance into their respective beliefs and practices.

However, the transformed meaning and practices of Christianity nowadays fail to preserve the balance between the deceased spirits and the living, as Church officials have sought to cut the bond between the dead and the living in the twentieth-first century. The Church officials, in insisting on a reformist doctrine, risk alienating believers because the new stance does not accommodate long-standing beliefs.

Despite some Christian teachings to the contrary, Christian villagers continue to relate to the spirit world. Catholic and Presbyterian villagers deal with this quandary through distancing themselves from some Christian ideas of death. The Bunun adopt what they regard as positive notions of Christianity, but also continue being attracted to the enduring pre-Christian ideas and practices in relation to ancestral spirits. This case reveals how complex the question of continuity and change is in the wake of indigenisation. It is not that one element is always more valid than the other. The incorporation of Christian and Bunun ancestral ideas vary historically to answer specific needs of different actors.

# Chapter 6 The Holy Spirit and the Construction of Christian Leadership

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On a cold afternoon in December 2010, I was chatting with my friend in the front yard of my residence in the settlement. Cina Umav joined us, speaking angrily. She was annoyed at the pastor for dropping her name from the church serving list for the upcoming year. She had had no idea of this until the serving lists were handed out during Sunday service that morning. She vehemently asserted that this was evidence she had been kicked out from the church. Furthermore, she attributed it to the pastor's jealousy for her pronounced spiritual gifts bestowed by God.

I became interested in the construction of Christian leadership and its contestation when I first met Cina Umav in early 2010. Cina Umav is a member of the local Presbyterian Church. She is highly respected by church members, although she has never served as a church elder or deacon. In the eyes of most local residents, she is a Christian model who studies the Bible and practices daily devotion early every morning to attain spiritual growth. People believe that she fasts periodically to persuade God to listen to her prayers. In addition, they have perceived Cina Umav's outstanding potency in communicating with God through prayer, which makes good things happen, as a sign that the Holy Spirit is always with her. I observed some villagers going to see Cina Umav for guidance or prayer whenever they encountered significant life challenges. Thus Cina Umav challenged the church pastor in her claim to direct spiritual power from God.

At our first meeting, when I asked Cina Umav's opinion on contemporary churches, to my surprise she criticised the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in general

and the local Presbyterian Church in particular for not following God but focusing on human priorities. 'The Church will not be blessed by God', she prophesied, 'because it becomes more bureaucratic and is governed by humans rather than by God. The messages preached at the Sunday service are not God's words from the Bible but the words of humans. This has deviated from God's teaching'. She continued, 'The present pastor resists the Holy Spirit and the renewal brought by the Spirit. This destines the church to wither'.

I was shocked by Cina Umav's bold challenge to the authority of the church pastor in a society where harmony is regarded as a dominant cultural value. In addition, pastors are supposed to be highly respected by the Bunun, as they serve as the intermediaries between God and humans. I gradually discovered that Cina Umav operates outside the guidance of the elected church pastor. She and her followers were often critical of the Church's organisation and pastor. They scrutinised nearly every aspect of the pastor, including his family, his way of doing things, the contents of the message he preached at the Sunday service, and even his low voice during his sermons, which they perceived as a lack of eloquence. The growing discontent spread through their gossip network had undermined the authority of the pastor's leadership to some extent. These were not simple struggles, but reflected a series of conflicts within the Luntien Presbyterian Church that had been developing for years. The church was divided over differences in the interpretation of the Holy Spirit.

Why did this happen? How do we make sense of the emerging tensions among the local Presbyterian community? At first glance, the challenges posed by Cina Umav to the local church seem to be the consequences of the advance of Charismatic Christianity, as has happened in many places around the world (Boudewijnse et al. 1998; Hollenweger 1972; Robbins 2004; Rubinstein 1996). Indeed, as we will see in

the subsequent section, the rise of Cina Umav is associated with the development of the Charismatic Renewal Movement, especially the Prayer Mountain Revival Movement, in Taiwan.

The immediate and direct filling of the individual believer with the Holy Spirit, which was the basis of the Pentecostal Movement, has swept over Taiwan (Cheng 2012; Rubinstein 1996). Since the 1970s, the rapid growth and dissemination of Charismatic Christianity has brought about substantial impacts, especially on the indigenous Presbyterian churches of the Atayal, Amis, Paiwan and Bunun peoples (McCall 1992; Shi ed. 2012). Those who have experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit criticise the church ministry and call for the renewal of the Church and individual believers. This has prompted Presbyterian theologians to ask why the Charismatic Movement has attracted so many converts (Chen ed. 1987). As reported by Shih, the powerful spiritual wave has challenged the basis of the Presbyterian Church, which historically paid more attention to enlightenment, education, social engagement, and social welfare. Possession by the Holy Spirit has been regarded as a marginal phenomenon (2012:6).

Beyond the theological discussion, as observed by Rubinstein, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Taiwan is ‘an important but unexplored facet of modern Taiwan’s religious life’ (1996:353), yet only a few academic scholars seem interested. Ying-kuei Huang (1991a) describes the occurrence of a series of religious events led by lay persons among the Bunun of central Taiwan in the 1980s, such as fasting, collective praying, healing miracles, speaking in tongues, and dream omens. Although what Huang observed had close relationships with the Charismatic Movement, he referred to this as the ‘New Religious Movement’ and stressed it was a form of ‘social movement’ triggered by the social instability and disorder caused by the development

of state, church, and capitalism among local Bunun communities, and including the widening gap between rich and poor, the opposition between the Bunun and Han Chinese, the contradictions between the super-localism directed by the state and Presbyterian Church, and the trend towards Bunun traditional localism.

Huang proposed that these social disorders were perceived through Bunun pre-Christian ideas of *dihanin* (sky) and *hanitu* (spirit), and that the new religious movement aimed to restore the relationship between humans, *dihanin* and *hanitu*. His answer employed broad socio-economic arguments about the role of anomie in stimulating the new religious movement. He argued that ‘these kinds of “objective” structural conditions need to be recognized by those studies through their own “subjective” cultural (or religious) concepts and collective response, which then shape the form of their social movement’ (1991a:2).

This chapter focuses on what such an explanation overlooks. I argue that Huang failed to discuss how the changes introduced by the new religious movement, including collective healing and praying, fasting, and confession, transformed the Bunun culture. I suggest that although it might be helpful to explain these conflicts as the consequences of the charismatic movement, we should be careful before linking occurrences that occur at the same time. To gain a better understanding of the emerging conflicts amongst local Presbyterian communities, it is necessary to locate these struggles within the larger socio-cultural, economic, and historical contexts.

By examining the construction and transformation of Bunun Christian leadership and its relationship with the Holy Spirit, I argue that the establishment of Christianity among the Bunun in the early stages of missionisation was charismatic in nature, in that it was all about experiencing the Holy Spirit. As proposed by Cheng, the

acceptance of Christianity among Taiwan's indigenous peoples after World War II 'appeared in the form of a Charismatic Movement' (2012:72). The prevailing understanding of the relationship with the spiritual world is one of healing, which is a continuing belief passed down from pre-Christian times. The loss of contact with spiritual power that institutionalisation has brought drove the Bunun to rethink the role of Christian leaders, and the emergence of the charismatic revival movement provided an alternative to preserve or restore the relationship with spiritual sphere. Alongside the gradual acceptance of 'charismatic' Christianity, however, Bunun ideas about their relations to God and their traditional culture have been changed as well.

To make this point, I begin by depicting a series of accidents which occurred in a very short period of time among the local Presbyterian community while I was conducting fieldwork. People attributed the successive misfortunes to the displeasure of God, and rumours hinted at the waning power of the church pastor, whose main task is to maintain or restore the balance between spirits and humans. To make sense of this emerging contest, I investigate how the Christian leadership was constructed in the early period of evangelisation, and attempt to verify that Christianity was developed on a charismatic basis. With the growth of Presbyterian churches, the idea of 'charisma' which is the essence of Bunun religious belief, was fading out. The acceptance of Charismatic Christianity has been a way to restore the relationship between spirits and humans since the 1980s. In the last section, I show that some new ideas brought by the charismatic movement have introduced a greater intimacy with God and a questioning of traditional culture.

## The Declining Power of the Church Pastor?

Several months after I began my fieldwork, four consecutive accidents occurred among the local Presbyterian community. Three of them were associated with traffic accidents, in which two people died and three were seriously injured. The first traffic accident happened in June, in which a young man in his mid-twenties died while on his way home at night due to being drunk, as mentioned in Chapter 5. Then in July, two teenagers without drivers' licenses were riding a motorbike and hit by a car in the city. Both were seriously injured, especially the passenger whose lower right leg was fractured. At almost the same time, a young man in his early twenties, who had recently completed his compulsory military service, was hit by a car while riding his motorbike in another city. The fourth accident was a middle-aged member of the Presbyterian Church, an inveterate alcoholic who fell into an irrigation ditch while inebriated. He drowned during the night and was only found the next morning.

People were shocked by these misfortunes occurring in such rapid succession. They were anxious about their practical well-being, gossiped about the probable causes, and were afraid the next accident might happen to them. In the evening, at the end of the Comforting Service for the drowned person, the pastor attempted to give some explanation regarding the series of accidents. He announced to the congregation:

Many of you might wonder why our church has encountered so many accidents recently. Some people might attribute the accidents to Ghost Month<sup>21</sup>, but I am telling you that even though the ghosts are strong, our Heavenly Father is much more powerful than they. Other people have suggested that our church's cross should face another direction.

Some of you might think these accidents were caused by God's displeasure, leading to

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<sup>21</sup> According to Chinese folk religion, the seventh month in lunar calendar is regarded as the Ghost Month, in which ghosts and spirits, including those of the deceased ancestors, come out from the lower realm.

the creation of community misfortunes. However, these conjectures are all nonsense. In fact, all of these accidents were not unpreventable... We, as Christians, must not speculate about God's will, but always believe that everything is a part of God's good plan.

While the church pastor explained the tribulations of human life as part of 'God's plan', the local Presbyterian members explained misfortunes by postulating unseen forces. They were in despair because the pastor could not find a specific reason for suffering or an adequate strategy to restore the balance between humans and the spiritual sphere. Although the pastor rejected the spiritual implications and attributed all these misfortunes to individual trespasses, including drunk and unlicensed driving, he still postulated an existing supreme spiritual power (i.e., the Christian God) that dominates people's lives. The local Presbyterians did accept the supreme power of the Christian God, but what they really wanted was someone to draw upon God's power for their practical well-being or prosperity, rather than doing nothing. Consequently I heard some Presbyterians comment that the power of the pastor was declining as he was unable to invite the blessings of God upon his people.

The narratives in relation to the cause of successive misfortunes demonstrated that the pastor and some Presbyterian villagers held very contradictory perceptions of the role and authority of the church pastor's leadership. People assume that the church pastor is the intermediary between the spiritual sphere and humans, and therefore has the power and responsibility to ensure that the force of *hanitu* (spirit) remains under control and that the power of God works for the believers' benefit. I suggest that such perceptions are in fact part of a long historical tradition, although the villagers do not clearly recognise this.

To investigate the nature of religious leadership and its construction in Christianity, it is first necessary to consider how the early Bunun evangelists shaped themselves, their messages, and most importantly, their relationship with the spiritual sphere.

## **Explaining the Growth of Bunun Christianity: Works of the Holy Spirit**

The ‘explosive’ growth and island-wide spread of Christianity among Taiwan’s indigenous population after the Second World War inspired western missionaries who hailed it as the ‘Pentecost of the Hills’ (Covell 1998; Dickson 1958) or the ‘Miracle of the Twentieth Century’ (Dickson 1948). Ralph Covell, a missionary of CB International (formerly Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society) worked among the Sediq people. In his book, *Pentecost of the Hills in Taiwan: the Christian Faith among the Original Inhabitants*, he attributed the rapid acceptance of Christianity by the indigenous peoples to the work of the Holy Spirit. He wrote (1998:162):

But now it was the fullness of time for God to pour out his Spirit on these people who, individually and as a group, had reached the point of no return. He did this through a prepared context and prepared leaders.

Missionaries maintained that these indigenous churches represented a return to the first-century Christian experience and to the Apostolic church itself. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were again available to indigenous peoples, just as they were given to the Apostles during the original Pentecost. In this section, I investigate how the idea of the encounter with the Spirit, which was the main emphasis of the missionaries, was perceived by the Bunun people and what their reaction was in the early contact period.

### *A 'Witch' as the Very First Christian Preacher*

The 'Pentecost of the Bunun Churches' is a chapter title in Pastor Hu's memoir in describing the sudden acceptance of Christianity and the subsequent mass conversion among the Bunun people after the Yuli Bible Training Session in 1949. Pastor Hu attributed the miracle to the work of the Holy Spirit. He wrote (1997[1984]:113):

The Holy Spirit is the motivator of personal conversion and church revival. Two thousand years ago, during the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended, and with disciples excellent in power, Christianity came into being. Such a day happened in Yuli among Bunun churches.

Not only the missionaries, but also the Bunun, asserted that the encounter with Christian God drove them to affiliate with Christianity. However, 'such a day' in Pastor Hu's words came earlier than the arrival of Pastor Hu in 1947 and the Yuli Bible Training Session in 1949. Furthermore, it is particularly noteworthy that most Bunun perceive their initial contact with the Christian God was made not by Presbyterian missionaries but by Abus, a well-known Bunun female spirit medium of the eastern Bunun region.

One afternoon in the early period of my fieldwork, I came across Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, who was sitting by the roadside after weeding his small patch of vegetable garden. After I briefly introduced myself and my research in Bunun evangelistic history, he told the story of Abus below:

Abus told me the story that I am now telling you.

Abus first heard the Bible stories from Okuyama, who was a Truku Christian. She was extremely amazed at Jesus' curing ability by touching or sucking the body of the

patients. She was curious about the power of Jesus Christ and wanted to incorporate it into her curing practices. She went to participate in the Sunday service of a neighbouring Han Taiwanese church, as suggested by Okuyama. She learned that people invoked Jesus' name at the end of prayer. She followed this way to summon the power of Jesus Christ in her practice. Generally speaking, according to my observation, what she did still followed the traditional model. The only difference was that she said: 'In Jesus' name I pray' at the end of her performance. By doing so, the name of Jesus Christ was propagated widely among the Bunun through her work. Subsequently she became a true Christian and began to preach the gospel among the Bunun villages, even prior to the arrival of Pastor Hu.

One day in 1946, I accompanied my elder brother to Kufeng to heal patients. After the curing, my elder brother drank with Taliban Tansikian who was the village head. At that time, Abus came and preached the gospel to them. Both Taliban and my elder brother were extremely furious at her because they were strongly antagonistic towards Christianity. Even worse, Taliban wanted to beat her at first, but he failed to do so because he feared he would be cursed by Abus, who was a powerful spirit medium.

After Abus believed in Jesus, other people always commented: 'She was a person with power (*mamangan*) in the past. Now she has changed her spiritual affiliation. We should follow her because what she is affiliated with right now must be much more powerful than her previous ones'. Subsequently, many of her disciples and patients came to accept Christianity. Christianity was disseminated among the Bunun territories of eastern Taiwan through Abus' work. She converted some Christian believers one year before the coming of Pastor Hu.

Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's recollection of the story of Abus, which is the starting point of virtually all historical narratives on Bunun evangelisation, provides a completely different interpretation to that of Pastor Hu. I first learned the story of Abus not from the field, but from Pastor Hu's history of the Bunun evangelistic experience published in 1965, and his memoir published in 1984. According to him, Abus was a 'witch' who performed sorcery to cure disease. She decided to join Christianity for practical motives to acquire or 'buy' the power of Jesus Christ for her magical work (Hu 1965:402-403, 1997[1984]:165-167). The perspective found in Pastor Hu's account entailed an underlying assumption that shamanism, a key element of pre-Christian Bunun social life, was seen by Presbyterian missionaries as one of the worst manifestations of paganism.

I gradually realised that such a disparaging perspective with regard to Abus did not go uncontested. As a contemporary Bunun pastor commented, for Pastor Hu the significance of Abus' case did not lie in her subsequent conversion or her efforts in propagating the Christian message, but as a negative instance of backward pre-Christian Bunun religion. From an early stage of my research I was struck by the enthusiasm of the Bunun people whenever they narrated early Bunun evangelistic history. The most common narrative, in contrast to the Han Taiwanese missionary's derogatory account, was one in which Abus was referred to as 'the very first Christian preacher who brought Christianity to the Bunun' or the 'first Christian preacher in Bunun territory'. Pi-te Liu, a Bunun Presbyterian pastor, was the first person who wrote down Abus' story and gave tribute to her in his master's thesis in 1990. In quoting Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's words he asserted: 'The hard Christian gospel could not easily be accepted by the Bunun people without "the semi-gospel witch" who formulated a favourable impression of Christianity for the Bunun people' (Liu 1990:37).

A number of master's theses written by Bunun Presbyterian ministers on the topic of Bunun evangelistic history have emerged in the early twenty-first century (*cf.* Chen 2004; Ma 2009; Sung 2007; Tian 2003). All of them hold positive views towards Abus' innovative actions in incorporating the spirit of Jesus Christ in her practice and credit her as the first Christian preacher of the Bunun. In Lo-ta Ma's master's thesis (2009), she praised Abus' outstanding achievement, which sounds like something out of the Acts of the Apostles. She wrote, '[m]any wonders and signs were done by her and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved' (2009:12).

The re-examination of the status of Abus in early Bunun evangelistic history was not a recent invention. The controversy was first addressed at a seminar of Bunun evangelistic history in 1963 (Chen 2004:50-52). At that seminar, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan attempted to challenge the existing Bunun evangelistic history written by Pastor Hu. According to Pastor Hu's writing, Bunun evangelisation commenced in 1947, the year of his arrival. However, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan strongly asserted that Bunun evangelisation started in 1946 when Abus started to preach the Christian message.

Clearly, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan had boldly challenged the authority of Pastor Hu, and it goes without saying that there was a highly politicised power struggle between the Han Taiwanese missionary and Bunun evangelists, or the majority and minority, as discussed in Chapter 4. Beyond political struggles, I suggest it is also crucial to make sense of why most Bunun people support the idea that a spirit medium who performed pre-Christian techniques and merely added the name of Jesus Christ at the end of her ceremony was their very first Christian preacher. In addition, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, the Bunun people of eastern Taiwan first had contact with Christianity through the neighbouring Truku people. However, these Truku Christian evangelists

were not considered the 'first Christian preachers among the Bunun' at all. I argue that the conceptualisation of spirit might be the key point.

Even though the concept of spirit was highlighted by both Pastor Hu and the Bunun people at the beginning of evangelisation, the debate over the legacy of Abus in Bunun evangelistic history presented the most striking example of the discrepancy between the Han Taiwanese missionary and the Bunun people. As one early Bunun evangelist concluded, Pastor Hu strongly rejected Pastor Talima Nahaisulan's proposition as he refused to put Jesus Christ on the same level as other *hanitu* spirits, as in Abus' case. In contrast to this, the Bunun people contend that the spirit of Jesus Christ was one of the true, benevolent and efficacious spirits brought to them by Abus.

By analysing Abus' case, some points need to be further elaborated. First, Jesus Christ was known as a spirit medium and the adoption of his curing power was important. In encountering Christianity, Abus as a spirit medium was seeking the best possible source of spirit agency for her cures. She saw Jesus Christ as the exemplary spirit medium and managed to acquire Jesus' power through attending church at the Sunday service and resorting to Jesus' spirit by adding his name at the end of her performance, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan recounts.

Second, Abus' practice of invoking Jesus' name at the end of her rituals implied that Jesus Christ was a beneficial spirit and the source of her power. The connection between the spirit medium (i.e. Abus) and the Christian spiritual being (i.e. Jesus) was constructed. Thus, Abus affiliated herself with Jesus in terms of the heritage of power. Furthermore, this line of power can reach the Christian God due to Jesus' frequent announcements that his power came from God. This attracted minor spirit mediums to come to Abus in the hope of learning from her. They perceived that through Abus they

could access the best possible source of spirit agency for their cures. This is why most of the early Bunun Christians were Abus' disciples.

Third, it is particularly noteworthy that the new role of religious specialists as message preachers was constructed as the result of Abus' work. The Bunun elders recalled that every time Abus arrived at a settlement she would call people together and tell the Bible story before the actual curing practices were performed. Although she was illiterate, her outstanding memory and eloquence made her an excellent storyteller. Her telling of biblical stories was ritualised and became embedded in the curing procedure, developing into an integral part of her practice. Preaching was completely new to the Bunun people, as it was not usual for spirit mediums to preach or instruct their clients in pre-Christian times. However, by incorporating biblical stories into her ritual, Abus successfully introduced preaching to the Bunun people.

An examination of how Bunun people talk about the story of Abus helps us to understand how the Bunun made sense of the power of Christian spirits. Although she failed to establish a large Christian congregation, Abus' efforts appear to have created a favourable climate for accepting Christianity, as has been commented on by an early Bunun evangelist. The Bunun were convinced the spirit of Jesus Christ was with her.

In short, the incorporation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in her healing practice and preaching behaviour convinced the Bunun that the power of Jesus Christ demonstrated through Abus was true and efficacious. For the Bunun, seeing is believing. The hearing of biblical stories was not sufficient. Real experiences with Jesus' Spirit in terms of healing facilitated the Bunun's acceptance of Christianity (Chapter 3). This explains why the Truku evangelists were not regarded as first Christian preachers among the Bunun.

### *The Shaman-like Early Bunun Evangelists and Lay Persons*

Widespread use of Bunun evangelists was a distinctive feature of Bunun missionisation. Emphasis on the recruitment of local members originated in the Presbyterian tradition in Taiwan. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan decided in 1915 that church and home services should be independent (Lo 2011:177).

With regard to the Bunun, from the first, the Presbyterian mission accepted that the Bunun church was to be settlement-based and run by the local adherents. This required the development of a large number of local Christian ministers dispersed throughout the Bunun territories. In addition, due to the lack of funding and personnel, Pastor Hu soon realised the need for Bunun participation in mission works by recruiting, training, and (in some cases) paying the Bunun who became his co-workers early in his mission work (Hu 1965, 1997[1984]). Pastor Hu worked as an itinerant missionary, Bunun Bible translator, teacher and supervisor of Bunun mission work until his retirement in 1971. Consequently, the Christian message was first brought to the Bunun not by Han Taiwanese or Western missionaries but by the Bunun evangelists in most Bunun communities.



Figure 8 The Early Bunun Presbyterian Evangelists

(courtesy of Pastor Wen-tsi Hu)

The pervasive use of Bunun evangelists had the unintended consequence of allowing them to reinterpret and accommodate their ancestral religious practices and beliefs to fit Christian framework, and vice versa. The Presbyterian Church indeed attracted a particular group of the Bunun to become its ministers. Unlike the early Han Taiwanese Presbyterian believers who were labourers, women, or plains indigenes from the lower or working classes, many pioneering Bunun Christians were well-educated and many of them were influential local government officials or leaders. Unlike Abus, who was illiterate and could only repeat the Bible stories she had heard and preached what she already knew, the early Bunun evangelists could read and draw

upon wider resources to spread the Christian message. As preachers, they did not merely imitate what they had received from the Presbyterian missionaries, but adopted what they heard and read as their own.

One of the very first Bunun to become a Presbyterian minister was Taliban Tansikian, referred to by Pastor Hu as ‘the Paul of the Bunun people’ (1997[1984]:99). Literature on Taliban Tansikian’s conversion presents a paradoxical picture of the cultural transformation accompanying his acceptance of Christianity. On the one hand, according to church documents, Taliban Tansikian’s conversion implied a radical break with the pre-Christian past. He was appointed as the itinerant evangelist among the Bunun communities in 1949, but some years earlier he had been an opponent who campaigned against the introduction of Christianity. He dramatically embraced Christianity soon after the Yuli Bible Training Session. On the other hand, according to Bunun Christian ministers’ writings, Taliban Tansikian was described as a person who attempted to integrate Bunun pre-Christian religious practices and Christianity in the early period of evangelisation.

In Liu’s study (1990), he gave a detailed description how Taliban Tansikian tried to demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ in terms of the techniques of spirit mediums in the early contact period. He wrote (1990:38):

Pastor Taliban Tansikian secretly concealed small stones in his hand before curing illness. After praying to Jesus Christ, he laid his hand on the afflicted part of the patient. Then he raised his hand and showed the patient the small stones in his palm, which was perceived as the cause of sickness.

On the surface, Pastor Taliban Tansikian’s behaviour seems to be duplicitous. However this is not what the Bunun people think. Instead they cared more that the

sickness was cured in terms of Pastor Taliban Tansikian's performance. As concluded by Liu, 'Pastor Taliban Tansikian's magic-like performance deeply convinced the patients of the healing ability of Jesus Christ' (1990:38). In addition the so-called trickery was merely an 'alternative expediency' drawn upon by Pastor Taliban Tansikian to attract the Bunun people to experience the power of Jesus Christ (*ibid.*). People even asserted that Pastor Taliban Tansikian's wisdom in doing so was in fact conferred by God, with the aim to disseminate Christianity. People believed that there was nothing wrong with the strategy.

Moreover the significance of the Bible was elevated through gospel preaching. During this period, the Christian messages brought by Bunun evangelists had gone beyond the telling of biblical stories and focused more on Christian commands (i.e. the Ten Commandments) and rituals. Presbyterian theology stresses the identity of Jesus as the Word and the New Covenant, as discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, like Moon He brought in new commands and reiterated the power of the spoken and revealed word. The Bunun pastors thus had the task of introducing this word and His healing power to others.

Clearly, the roles of the spirit mediums and the Christian ministers were very similar in the early stages of Christian contact. Many miracles that happened in the early stages of evangelisation were widely circulated among the Bunun communities and became a part of the Bunun's early evangelistic history. I quote the experiences of a Bunun early evangelist, Ching-hao Wang, from Liu's study (1990:46) to demonstrate this:

When Ching-hao Wang preached in Chungyeh village, he was regarded as insane by an influential person in that settlement, who requested a man kill him with a machete.

However, as the machete touched Wang's body, the man felt a strong reacting force from his neck, fell to the ground, and became insane. The man's family resorted to Wang's assistance. After praying to God for him, the man was cured and became normal.

In another case, when Ching-hao Wang preached the gospel in Hsiaoma village, he was surrounded by several men. He ran to the shabby house of a leprosy patient. These people feared to enter but stood outside. Ching-hao Wang prayed for the victim of leprosy in front of them. Next day, the patient's skin was shed piece by piece like scales and the new skin came out underneath. Soon after that the patient recovered completely.

How can we explain the frequent appearance of miracles and their relationship to the growth of Christianity during the early stages of Christian contact? Liu suggested that God's revelation through miracles was one of the determining factors in the Bunun's acceptance of Christianity (1990:45). He wrote, 'God demonstrates miracles through Jesus Christ as the seal of the arrival of God's kingdom. In the initial period of Christian contact, God also drew upon signs and wonders as seals of the coming of God's kingdom upon the Bunun people' (*ibid.*).

In addition to the contributions of these early Bunun evangelists, the Bunun also perceived that anyone inspired by the Holy Spirit could evangelise, regardless of educational qualifications. This belief encouraged all converts to see themselves as potential evangelists. They assumed that if they were truly inspired they would succeed in establishing many Christian congregations. I have been told by many Bunun elders that there were in fact many Bunun lay persons who went to different Bunun communities to propagate Christian messages on their own, as they claimed to have received inspiration and divine calling by God's Spirit, or the Holy Spirit. In the early

Bunun evangelistic history written by Pastor Hu, he also mentioned two female Bunun Christians, Abu and Talimua, who were guided by the Holy Spirit and travelled from their home in central Taiwan to preach the gospel among the eastern Bunun communities.

In November 1956, when Abu and Talimua preached in Wuling, they encountered great interferences and many obstacles, and were forced to leave. When they were about to depart, an insane man called Sa took his rifle and ran around wildly. The spirit medium next door had been praying for him by slaughtering a pig and sprinkling ashes to drive the ghost from him, but all these efforts were in vain. At that moment, someone requested Abu and Talimua to pray for him. Immediately, the insane man calmed down. As a result, villagers believed their words.

Three days later, another person became insane, biting his clothes, chewing tobacco, and biting his wrist. The villagers requested the two female preachers to pray, and he suddenly recovered. Subsequently, villagers came to join the church one after the other (Hu 1965:412).

Although neither of them had any formal training, God's Spirit was demonstrated through them, the Bunun believe. In short, during this early period, access to the Holy Spirit was not limited to a specific group but open to everyone.

I suggest that the encounter with the Holy Spirit became a platform in which the Bunun people and Presbyterian missionaries were able to communicate with each other. But each group had rather distinct interpretations of this. While Han Taiwanese missionaries aimed at distancing the Bunun from their pre-Christian past, the Bunun saw themselves as historical subjects and remained convinced that a religious

practitioner is the intermediary of spirits and humans – a perception that strongly shaped their involvement with Christianity, which was charismatic in nature.

In terms of encounters with the Holy Spirit, the Bunun were able to challenge notions of the inferiority of pre-Christian Bunun religious practices to Christianity. It affirmed the validation of pre-Christian religious ideas while acknowledging the greater power of the Holy Spirit. Christian leadership was constantly constructed on the power of the divine, and its efficacy judged in terms of healing, improved prosperity and other very visible and material outcomes. This is how Christianity was legitimated and indigenised.

In conjunction with the institutionalisation of Bunun Presbyterian churches, the signs and wonders that were the cornerstone of Bunun Christianity during the early stage of missionisation vanished. God's Spirit could only be channelled by officially recognised ministers. This was achieved through ordination. The rite of ordination confirmed the authority of church ministers in recognising the new ecclesiastical minister. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan practised the 'laying on of hands' when marking the taking up of religious office. Pastor Hu followed this tradition as a way of authorising the performance of leadership tasks in the local Bunun churches and calling on the Holy Spirit to empower the ordained pastors.

The first Bunun pastor, Taliban Tansikian, was ordained in 1958. Next year, in April 1959, Talima Nahaisulan was ordained. As Pastor Talima Nahaisulan commented, it demonstrated the transmission and connection of God's power and authority to perform ritual tasks, as well as the special gifts of each pastor who laid his hand on the candidate. On the other hand, ordination also limited access to the Holy Spirit. Those lay persons who carried out mission work through the leading of God's

Spirit were excluded from most official roles as they had not received official training or recognition. Direct contact with the Holy Spirit could now only be achieved through the officially recognised pastors.

The rise and fall of charismatic leadership has sociological and historical meaning. In Max Weber's classic typology of religious leadership, he distinguished 'prophetic' from 'priestly' religious leadership. Weber argued that the distinctive feature of the prophet is the sense of personal divine calling, or charisma, from which he or she offers sacred truth. In contrast, priests administer religion on the authority of office in an ecclesiastical hierarchy. In addition, Weber hypothesised a recurring cycle, in which many religious movements were founded by prophets, but survived by routinizing charismatic authority or replacing it with a more official form of leadership (1963:46-79).

In the Bunun case, the development cycle of religious leadership seems to echo Weber's model. The indigenous religious authority was charismatic but limited to the early period of missionisation. With the growth of Church organisation, charismatic authority was replaced by institutional authority. Nevertheless, I argue that if we take the subsequent development of Bunun Christianity into account, it shows that the distinction between charismatic and institutional authority is not always feasible. The essence of Bunun religious leadership continues to be based on the leader's spiritual power in maintaining or restoring the balance between spirits and humans, outside and inside. The revival of the charismatic alternative reflects in fact their dissatisfaction at the loss of contact with the spiritual world which institutionalisation has brought.

## **The Emerging Charismatic Renewal Movement**

Taiwan experienced rapid industrialisation in the mid-1960s. The major influences on indigenous communities were urban migration and assimilation. The Bunun communities situated far from urban areas underwent momentous social and economic transformations following the industrialisation of Taiwan in the 1970s (Huang 1992). A new linkage between rural communities and urban regions was formed. The Bunun youth and middle-aged people migrated to cities as workers, thus reducing the local population and decimating the agricultural workforce. Gradually, the migrants' salary became the main source of household income. In Luntien and Hsiuluan, encouraged by government schemes, villagers turned to cash crops such as sugarcane, tobacco, and corn. These developments undermined the villages' relative self-sufficiency and agency and further ensnared them in the exterior society and economy.

The Bunun people were exposed to Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity through various sources. The Bunun Presbyterian churches of central Taiwan were moved by the visits of a 'seer', Chih-chao Yun, of the Atayal group (Shih ed. 2012:187-189), and the Prayer Mountain in the early 1980s (Huang 1991a, 1991b). The churches were deeply divided for a time over the forms of worship, the validity of visions, and their interpretations by the visionaries (McCall 1992:27).

The Bunun of eastern Taiwan first experienced charismatic influences from an organisation called the Prayer Mountain. The Prayer Mountain was not a church in any formal sense, but was a nondenominational body that worked with and for Protestant churches (Rubinstein 1996:357). It emphasised the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, provided temporary retreats for members of the various Protestant denominations, and lead participants through a complex process of spiritual refreshment and renewal

(Rubinstein 1991:112). People fasted and prayed all day, and were requested to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal process. Participants manifested the power of the Holy Spirit by speaking in tongues or being possessed by the Holy Spirit. In addition, the leaders of the institution healed the sick by laying on of hands.

Most Bunun Presbyterian leaders of eastern Taiwan were ambivalent toward the Prayer Mountain Movement. They admitted the revival spirit brought to them by the Prayer Mountain Movement, but were fearful of its charismatic aspects. In Luntien Presbyterian Church, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, the resident pastor, forbade his congregation from participating in the Prayer Mountain retreat. However, a small number of local Presbyterians disregarded his order due to their great desire for healing or experiencing the Holy Spirit. Cina Umav and her husband were the first in Luntien to participate in the Prayer Mountain meetings. They were deeply moved by what they saw and heard during their initial visit. Cina Umav's husband spoke of their experiences:

My wife was easily filled with the Holy Spirit. Although I had been to Prayer Mountain several times I had not experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I earnestly desired the Holy Spirit. I had worked hard but had seen little fruit. Finally, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and was filled with love, joy, praise, and power. This is my only experience to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I perceive that my wife's spirituality is higher than mine. It is easy for her to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's manifestations on Cina Umav and her husband amazed other villagers, who were invited to attend the Prayer Mountain retreats. Some of them responded and went to the retreats with the hope of experiencing the Holy Spirit in healing. One villager reported:

I was greatly inspired by Cina Umav's experience and decided to go to the Prayer Mountain with her. I have been there twice. I went there to pray to God to cure my son's insanity. I fasted and prayed all day long. It was so amazing that, although I consumed nothing except water, I didn't feel hungry. During one of the meetings the pastor prayed for me and laid his hand on my head. I felt like I was being charged with a torrent of warmth and fell to the floor unconscious. On another occasion, I saw the sick crowding in front of the altar asking for and receiving healing. I saw an insane young girl be cured by the pastor. I was deeply convinced that the pastor transmitted God's power, through the Holy Spirit, to our bodies by laying a hand on our head.

For many participants, the weekend renewal experience strengthened their faith. This idea of the Holy Spirit was not a new concept. However, the experiences of 'being filled with the Holy Spirit', 'being hit by the Holy Spirit' or 'speaking in tongues' were novelties for Bunun. In pre-Christian times, people contacted spirits in dreams and ritual practitioners called upon the participation of spirits; none was possessed by spirits.

After having experienced God's Spirit individually, these new charismatics protested that their home church needed to be renewed through the power of the Holy Spirit. They saw Cina Umav as their underground spiritual leader, and were often critical of the church organisation, challenging the pastor and urging him to be open in following the instructions of the Holy Spirit. But, the pastor rejected these requests and responded to their appeals with more conservative measures.

Although he did not ignore the existence and power of the Holy Spirit, by quoting 1 Corinthians 14: 4, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan criticised those who claimed to be filled with the Holy Spirit as benefiting only themselves. According to villagers, as he grew

older and became relatively feeble, Pastor Talima Naisulan's authority was greatly weakened in the last decade of his tenure. Furthermore, his leadership credentials were undermined by the church's internal political struggles which created unrest among the local Presbyterian community. People were convinced that his power in maintaining or restoring balance was declining.

### **The Inauguration of a New Pastor and New Measures**

The challenge posed by the Prayer Mountain Movement did not demand reconciliation until the inauguration of a new pastor. To revitalise the church, he first proposed the true spirit of Presbyterianism, in which the Church is governed by a body of elected elders. The new pastor asserted that all church elders were equal and should serve with the pastor, assuming responsibility for the nurture and leadership of the congregation. He devised a new method of church service in which every elder was paired with a deacon and made responsible for a week's church activities. Church affairs were not decided solely by the pastor, but by the council comprised of the pastor, elders and deacons.

The new pastor tried to create an egalitarian environment in which everyone was eligible for religious rewards, including the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He suggested that the Protestant church is founded on 'the priesthood of all believers' and denied that the clerical ministry is the sole priesthood. He often asked church elders to pray for the sick or for a family while making visits, and held annual training for lay men or women to become the hosts of the Wednesday Evening Home Meetings. He encouraged church members to build individual relationships with Tama Dihanin, literally Father in Sky. No one needs a priest to pronounce the forgiveness of one's sin, or pastors to act as intermediaries; rather, all can approach God directly.

This does not mean that the idea of a clergy is abandoned altogether by the new pastor. He works as a preacher, teacher and pastor rather than as a sacramental celebrant, although he continues to administer the sacraments. He regards himself as shepherd of the sheep who belong to God. He often acknowledges to church members that he has not been given the gifts of healing the sick or driving out evil spirits by praying. However, he maintains that his calling is to build the correct understanding of God among His people and develop the proper relationship with God. He is also convinced that this goal can only be achieved through the study of the Bible.

The church emphasises the significance of the Bible at the outset of evangelisation, as mentioned above, but the authority to preach or interpret the Bible is given to the pastor alone. The Luntien Presbyterian Church is a perfect illustration of what Presbyterians want from a church. The church strips away anything that might distract the congregation from focusing on the words. In the church there is the inscription on the preaching table 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path'. On the left side of it is the service table with the words, 'The Word of God' and on the right side table the words, 'Incline Thine Ear'. All of the focus is on the words read from the Bible and then expounded by the preacher.

In 2003, the Luntien Presbyterian Church launched the Bible Reading Campaign with a slogan: 'Everyone to own a Bible, to read the Bible every day'. From the new pastor's perspective, studying the Bible can revitalise the congregation's spiritual vigour, as most of them are second- or third-generation Christians. Their faith can be strengthened and their spirituality advanced in terms of Bible study (Annual Report of Luntien Presbyterian Church 2004).

In addition, the new pastor responded to the challenges posed by the Prayer Mountain Movement by adopting new patterns of worship and prayer. On Sunday morning the congregation gathered thirty minutes before the beginning of service to sing hymns, psalms or other spiritual songs. Piano, guitar and drums were used. Worshippers clapped their hands or swayed as they engaged in singing. The singing and movement make it easy for the congregation to engage in the worship, notwithstanding the linguistic variability of the songs, which may be in the local language or Mandarin. The significance of singing is the expression of the participants' emotions. Sometimes the new greeting, 'Hallelujah', is used. This replaces the older greeting, 'Ping-an' (Peace), which had been introduced by early Presbyterian missionaries. In general, church members are positive, some enthusiastic, in their response to these new innovations.

### **The Renewing Tensions**

Impressed by the innovative measures initiated by the new pastor, Cina Umav decided to step out and collaborate with him to bring about the Church's renewal. She proposed a series of Bible study sessions, called the Fundamentals of the Faith, for all church members to increase their knowledge of the Bible. Her proposal was accepted by the church council. The new pastor also supported this class, seeing it would enhance and extend adherents' understanding of Christian teachings. The class commenced in July 2006. There were approximately ten regular participants, all of them female, who met on a weekly basis. Cina Umav provided a series of courses including an introduction to the Bible, how to understand the Bible, the attributes of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of grace and salvation.

Two basic principles heavily stressed by Cina Umav were the absolute authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and the belief in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Cina Umav often tells people to listen to God's word and will in terms of the Bible. She is deeply convinced that Bible is the Word of God and is sacred. Her conviction of the efficacy of the Bible is not merely derived from doctrinal teaching but her own experiences.

Many years ago, when she was in her twenties, she was preparing for a promotion examination. She prayed earnestly to God to help her to pass the exam. She was very anxious about the result even before the examination. One day she prayed to God to reveal his will in the Bible. She flipped through the Chinese Bible quickly. Suddenly, her eyes fell on the words 'the next year' in the book of Genesis, 'The next year I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son' (Genesis 18:14). In this verse Jehovah promised to give Abraham and Sarah a son even though both of them were over ninety years old. Cina Umav told me at that moment the words 'the next year' seemed to be magnified more than ten times and directly came into her eyes. She perceived this as a message from God. However, she did not submit herself to God's will that first year. She failed the exam, although she had been well prepared. The next year however she succeeded, even though she was poorly prepared. Since then she has often resorted to the Bible in times of uncertainty.

She also strongly stresses the active role and gifts of the Holy Spirit, about which Presbyterian churches often have a cautious attitude. She proposes that God guides people through his words as well as through the Holy Spirit. She asks people to open their hearts and be filled with the Holy Spirit, and thus renew their spirits. She believes that the Holy Spirit is at work transforming the lives of all those who accept Him.

Prayer is strongly emphasised by Cina Umav as a special channel to communicate with God. At the end of every Bible study session, a special atmosphere is created through the singing of a special hymn in vernacular to invoke the Holy Spirit to be present amongst them, and then all members speak in a chorus prayer. Subsequently Cina Umav asked participants to announce their prayer requests in turns.

This is a kind of praying exercise. For a start, they make a lot of explicit requests of God in prayer, such as to pass an exam, to find a good job, or to become pregnant. I suggest that the participants who constantly engage in that form of prayer therefore create a sense of experience. The praying community is vital in allowing them to sustain their sense of the absolute, underlying reality of God through periods of personal darkness. Cina Umav told participants that the reason God did not answer their prayers was because they did not pray earnestly or have a sufficiently deep faith in God. I suggest that the telling and hearing of stories or testimonies is prominent. Whether the prayer request fails or succeeds, success and failure are both taken as an affirmation that God exists and is always with them.

The idea of intimacy with God has been cultivated. Although God has been referred to the Father in the Sky since the inception of Christianisation, Bunun in the past perceived God living in the sky far from their daily lives. Consequently, they always prayed to Jesus as the middle man between God and humans. However, a new perception of people's relation with God has developed since the 1980s; there is a widespread saying among the local Presbyterian community that God only has a son and does not have grandsons. Everyone is therefore encouraged to cultivate the sense of a direct individual relationship with God. Thus, everyone is affiliated with God as his son or daughter. They envisage and talk to God the Father as their imaginary father who listens to their thoughts and prayers, and comforts and consoles them. Both men

and women long for encounters with this personal God. At times, miracles of God are revealed in their everyday activities.

I gradually realised that Cina Umav impressed her congregation with real-life illustrations in order that the congregation may further participate in the hermeneutical process and bring these experiences to daily life. One day, Cina Umav asked me to accompany her to pick up her son at a nearby railway station. On our way to the station, she told me how miraculous were the works that God had done for her son. Her son did not have tickets with seats at the beginning, but got seats after boarding. And, although he missed one train, he caught another train in time. ‘Thank God’ has become the phrase they always use when starting or ending the sharing of personal experiences.

The stress on the authority of the Bible also started a process of demonizing Bunun traditional culture. Cina Umav contends that Scripture is sufficient and those things that are not included in the Bible are wrong, incorrect, or do not follow God’s words. She encouraged Bunun Christians to make a break from their traditional customs, such as marriage regulations or traditional festival, as they are not written in the Bible. In short, Cina Umav urges Christians to rid themselves of demonic influences brought upon them by traditional customs and ritual practices.

### **The Response to Cina Umav**

Even though both the new pastor and Cina Umav hold the Bible to have authority, they disagree as to what precisely such a claim means. The present pastor is a prudent person and was deeply concerned by the phenomena he observed. The divination-like use of the Bible was seen as a distortion of Scripture. Furthermore, the power and raw emotions of such meetings were considered dangerous. The pastor discovered that the trainees saw themselves as being spiritually superior to other church members, as they

read the Bible more frequently and prayed to God more earnestly. He also feared that the training could slip into non-scriptural patterns of belief.

This difference in the understanding of the Holy Spirit or spirituality almost split the church into two parties. The pastor felt that he could provide a balanced interpretation of Scripture by emphasising that the fruits of the Holy Spirit were evidence of God's presence, rather than signs and wonders. From early 2010, the pastor used an excerpt from a book, *The Abundant Life*, to teach the fundamental Christian doctrines at the Wednesday Evening Home Meeting. A series of topics were discussed, including the attributes of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, sin, grace, and salvation.

By offering a systematic teaching of the Scriptures the pastor hoped church members would have a correct understanding of the Bible, which would prevent them from being misled by others. I quote a description of one of the Wednesday Evening Home Meetings from my field-notes to show how it proceeded.

On 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2010, I participated in a Wednesday Evening Home Meeting in Tama Taupas' house. The topic of today is: The God that we worship- God is a Spirit. I arrived in Tama Taupas' house before 7:30 p.m. where people had already gathered and begun to rehearse songs. At 7:30 p.m., the meeting's host, Cina Ibu, announced the commencement of the meeting by saying: *Kaupaka tais'an, Ping-an* (Brothers and Sisters, Peace). Then she asked all participants to pray in silence to prepare themselves for the upcoming meeting. After singing three hymns, Cina Ibu read the meeting's topic and the verse, cited in Chinese and in Bunun respectively: 'God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). After reading the verse, the host asked all participants to read with her the explanations regarding the topic

printed on the church weekly report. Since the attributes of God are many, the explanations had been put in bullet point form to make it easier to read. Each point was further interpreted by certain verses.

After that she asked a question - Why cannot Christians make or worship idols? - and everyone was encouraged to contribute comments. Two participants shared their own experiences regarding Han Chinese folk religion but their comments were not pertinent to the topic. Following that, Tama Taupas stood up and announced his prayer requests. Participants sang a hymn to call upon the Holy Spirit, then everyone engaged in a chorus of prayer. After that a hymn was sung while collecting their offerings of money. At the end, the meeting's host announced the venue for next week, and closed the meeting.

Many villagers reported to me that the study material was too hard to understand. Even the meeting hosts who were trained by the pastor admitted that they did not fully know the meaning of the weekly study material. To prevent errors in interpretation, at one Sunday service the pastor asked the meeting hosts not to interpret the material at will if the materials were beyond their understanding. The hosts were asked to guide the congregation to read through the contents only.

Praying was the most attractive part of the Wednesday Evening Home Meeting for the congregation. People recognised that collective praying was powerful. The meetings held by Cina Umav were more attractive. Her emphasis on 'live and direct' (Engelke 2007:9) communion with God and the Holy Spirit was more appealing. In contrast, the present pastor's course seemed to be more intellectual and less attractive. Besides, the emphasis on the efficacy of ritual practices rather than knowledge of doctrine remains an outstanding nature of much Bunun Christianity.

I am suggesting that the rise of charismatic forms threatened the authority of the institution, not the other way, in the Bunun case. The Bunun have become dissatisfied because the institution has neglected what they see as important. In addition, the church pastor has challenged the link between spirits and humans and undermined his authority by openly announcing his inability to restore the balance.

Controversies surrounding the issues of the Bible and the Holy Spirit brought the training sessions to an unhappy ending. Cina Umav and her supporters attributed this to the new pastor's envy of Cina Umav's special gift in praying. Subsequently they sometimes went to other spirit-filled churches to attend Sunday service. They criticised the present pastor, saying that he merely focused on the formulaic church service and sermon, rather than bringing adherents toward a true understanding of the Bible, including the Holy Spirit. Cina Umav declared in prophecy that the church was destined to collapse because the Holy Spirit did not dwell in it. In early 2011, dissatisfied with the interpretation of the Holy Spirit and the leadership of the present pastor, a small group began meeting separately for religious fellowship and established themselves as a separate congregation led by Cina Umav.

## **Conclusion**

In his article on the global development of Charismatic Christianity, Sween (2012) pointed out the dangers in viewing Pentecostalism as a singular phenomenon. He urged researchers think critically about the universal aspects of the movement and carefully examine the local. He suggested by means of the contextualisation of the charismatic movement, researchers can view religious events that 'are at the same time more universal and local, both more ancient and contemporary, and also more relevant and true to the experience of Christianity in a particular locale' (2012:4).

Taking up his advice to investigate the native models of Christianisation, Shih (2013) divides the charismatic movement among Taiwan indigenous Presbyterian churches into two stages. The first stage commenced in the early 1950s when Taiwan's indigenous peoples converted to Christianity en masse. This was a native or grassroots charismatic movement which had no relation with western Pentecostalism and was manifested in their participation, use of dreams or visions in worship, and models of mind/body correspondence that promoted healing by prayer. The second stage started in the 1980s, influenced by global charismatic movement networks and the revival of the Taiwan indigenous movement.

Shih points out that the most distinctive characteristic of the first stage is the filling by the Holy Spirit or the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She argues that direct experience with spirits, the essence of shamanism among Taiwan indigenous peoples, is one of the significant turning points in the indigenisation of Christianity, even though this is contrary to the spiritual teachings of the Presbyterian tradition. She comments that the 'familiarity of religious imagery' between indigenous shamanism and the Holy Spirit in Christian Charismatic Movement is the key point. However, although they look similar on the surface they are essentially quite distinct, including the deities and worldview (Shih 2013).

It is crucial to give a place to the native model of the charismatic movement to understand its growth. The Bunun case shows that Bunun pre-Christian religious elements, as mediated through ritual specialists and ideas of spirit, have been part of Christianity from the outset. Such a claim underwrites much of the work that sees Christianity as highly malleable and quick to localise because it is extraordinarily open to syncretising with indigenous ideas of spirituality. In effect, although the early Bunun evangelists adopted the pre-Christian ideas of *hanitu* to facilitate the acceptance of

Christian God; they also used it to attack the traditional practices, thus profoundly altering the way the spirits were understood. Such a claim also reveals that the restoration of balance is still a prominent concern of the Bunun, to be achieved through the mediation of religious leaders. For these Bunun, the pastor in ignoring the spirits squandered his leadership credentials, which should be expressed through maintaining and restoring balance with the spirit world. At the same time, Charismatic Christianity also introduces new ideas which profoundly change the way pre-Christian practices are understood.

In short, the nature of the Bunun pre-Christian religious ideas and beliefs is charismatic in nature. Indigenous Christianity among the Bunun is more likely to be ‘Pentecostal’ in its emphases, particularly in regard to its spirituality and encounters with the spirit world.

I argue that an examination of how Bunun people talk about early Bunun evangelistic history helps illuminate the tensions and struggles of the present. It does so by offering insights into how Bunun people conceive of themselves as historical subjects as well as how they think about the nature of religious leadership and its relationship with the spiritual sphere, as evidenced by the particular histories they choose to tell. These perspectives in turn offer insights into a number of actions Bunun take in response to the new situation. Rather than attributing the revival of the charismatic movement to kinds of deprivation arguments (*cf.* Huang 1991a), the revival movement renews the nature of an earlier historical epoch. The Bunun hold the idea that a religious leader is the intermediary of spirits and humans – a perception that strongly shapes their involvement with the charismatic movement.

# Chapter 7 Restructuring Bunun Identity: the Regeneration of an Ancestral Ritual

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The evenings of April 2010 in Luntien resounded with singing and dancing for the upcoming *Manahtangia*, or the Shooting the Ear festival, which would be held on 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Every evening after dinner, villagers of different districts congregated at different meeting points to practice the ancestral ceremonies they had chosen to perform at the festival. Villagers earnestly discussed the best way to perform the rituals or to invent new dances or movements. Although the Bunun had no dance or even a word for dance before the Japanese colonial period (Wu 1993:52; Yang 2011:316), they agreed that dancing could make their performance even more attractive, especially when accompanied by their renowned singing.

What I observed during the course of fieldwork in 2010 contradicted my first impression in 1996 as a postgraduate student conducting master's fieldwork. In 1996, many villagers strongly recommended I join in this ritual if I wanted to study the 'traditional' Bunun culture. 'This is exactly our traditional culture', a village elder commented. In the ceremony, they followed ancestral procedures and prayed to a variety of spirits as in the past. In addition, what made this event outstanding was that this was the first time the Bunun of Kufeng village had attempted to revitalise the ancestral ritual that had disappeared for over half a century. The revival was initiated by the well-educated villagers who turned to ancestral rituals in the hope of transcending villagers' different religious affiliations (i.e., Presbyterian or Catholic) and forging a single Bunun identity.

Seen from a broader socio-political context, the revival was also a part of the state's attempt to incorporate indigenous cultures as an integral part of Taiwan's national identity. The construction of the Bunun ethnic identity was crucial in the process of Taiwan's quest for national identity, but it had also introduced new tensions among Bunun who questioned the religious significance of the traditions.

In this chapter, I examine the idea of culture or tradition and what it means for the different actors involved in the revival of the Shooting the Ear festival, particularly for the Bunun people of Hualien County. The reascent Shooting the Ear festival is in fact more than just a cultural performance or the 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm 1983a). Although the state brought in resources and encouraged the form of identity desired by the Bunun, it also increased the potential for conflict. Debates about the spiritually-based nature of ancestral rituals are hotly disputed among the churches and people. I argue that the possibilities and tensions associated with the revival of ancestral culture as 'tradition' cannot be understood simply as a political strategy to manage relations with the state (*cf.* Yang 2011), but also reveals that the spiritual dimension of the ritual is significant to many Bunun. In this sense, religion cannot be easily separated from the rest of life.

### **Separated Brothers: the Presbyterian and Catholic Bunun**

The strategy of inventing tradition and the interpretation of its spiritual significance must be seen in the light of the relationship between Catholics and Presbyterians, which was quite strained after the arrival of Catholicism. The Bunun of eastern Taiwan had no contact with the Catholic Church until the mid 1950s. In 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party seized control of China, China was declared an atheist country. Foreign missionaries were considered as imperialists or spies and expelled

soon after. During the 1950s, the Roman Catholic Church redeployed a large number of priests and other religious workers from China to Taiwan.

In 1951, Catholic Bishop André-Jean V érineux, a missionary priest of the Paris Foreign Mission Society (*Missions étrangères de Paris*, MEP), upon withdrawing from China, saw the many indigenous people of eastern Taiwan as potential converts. He wrote (1980:59):

In such an extensive land, there is no church at all or any sign of cross. The aborigines living scattered in the mountains or by the sea numbered more than one hundred thousand. To my surprise, no one instructs them in God's word, or introduces them to an understanding and worship of God.

After much effort, on 7 August 1952, the region of Hualien and Taitung Counties was established as the Apostolic Prefecture of Hualien. Bishop André-Jean V érineux was appointed as Apostolic prefect in charge of evangelistic work in this region.

Catholic mission work among the Bunun of eastern Taiwan began in 1955, when Father Marcel Flahutez, who was the priest of MEP, arrived in Yuli to conduct evangelistic work. He preached the gospel to Han Chinese as well as the neighbouring Bunun people. The report of Hualien Diocese, MEP in July 1955, recorded the first group of Bunun's conversion:

On Easter, Father Marcel Flahutez baptised fifty-six people. Some of them were the emigrants from Mainland China who had fled to Taiwan after China was seized by the Chinese Communist Party. Father Marcel Flahutez was glad to learn that thirty-two Bunun also received baptism on that day. Father Marcel Flahutez was the first priest to visit the Bunun communities. Subsequently, the Roman Catholic Church spread to five other surrounding Bunun communities (as cited in Lin 2002:121).

On 16 June 1955, a French MEP priest, Father Joseph Le Corre was appointed to work in the Fuli Catholic Church. According to the recollections of Kufeng villagers, from 1956 Father Joseph Le Corre began to contact the Bunun Kufeng village with the help of local residents.

The arrival of Catholic Christianity challenged the dominant status of Presbyterians in the indigenous communities and created competition between them. The Presbyterians who already had established numerous strongholds labelled the Catholic Church as a major competitor. When the Catholic missionaries arrived, they had access to ample supplies of relief goods, such as food and clothing. In every village, they encouraged people to attend Sunday Mass to receive these relief goods. Consequently, some Presbyterians changed their religious affiliation and became Catholics. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan once lamented to me: ‘Before the arrival of Catholicism, almost all the people in Luntien came to the Presbyterian Church. However, many have been attracted by the material goods Catholic missionaries brought, and thus joined them’.

The Catholic churches were therefore criticised as ‘sheep stealers’ by Presbyterians. Pastor Hu also referred to the challenges brought about by the arrival of the Catholic Church as the ‘Storm upon Mountain Churches’ (1997[1984]:155). To deal with this quandary, the Presbyterians held a special meeting in which representatives of eastern institutions came together to discuss how to face the ‘invasion of Catholic pagans’ (Vérineux 1980:98).

From the Catholic perspective, however, Bishop André-Jean Vérineux referred in his memoirs to these Presbyterian counterparts as ‘Separated Brothers’ (1980:98) and described the challenges created by these Presbyterians. He stated (*ibid.*):

According to the progress of evangelisation, I am convinced that fifty per cent of mountain people can receive baptism a half year later. As long as we continue to work hard, and personnel and financial conditions are sufficient, it will not take long before the other fifty per cent will join our procession...The prospect is based on the progress of missionisation then, my head is illuminated by the glorious achievements by ignoring those Christians who surrounded us.

The competition for potential converts threatened relationships between Catholic and Presbyterian villagers. The theological differences and arguments between two Christian denominations became points of attack against each other. The foreign priests who served in the Bunun parishes came from European backgrounds and allowed the drinking of alcohol and the use of tobacco. This was frowned upon by Presbyterians, who saw such vices as the works of Satan. The priests also permitted Catholic believers to continue many Bunun traditional practices, such as witchcraft, which were considered unacceptable by Presbyterians. Roman Catholic villagers were denounced by the Presbyterians as being idolatrous because of their veneration of Mary and the use of images in their worship.

At the early stage of evangelisation, Catholicism and Presbyterianism were described as completely different religions, the former a worship of Mary and the latter a worship of Jesus Christ. People told me that their parents left instructions to them before death not to change religion because Catholic and Presbyterian members went to different Heavens after death. They were convinced that a family should have the same religion so that they could reunite in the same Heaven one day.

The different religious affiliations became impenetrable social groups. The relations between the Catholic and Presbyterian communities were exceptionally frosty.

Members of the same denomination tended to marry within the religious group, and intermarriage between the two religious groups was restricted. The kinship structure was bisected by religious affiliation. Kin groups belonging to the same kinship system did not share pork at marriages as one family, because they were affiliated with different religions. As recollected by Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, the relationship between Catholic and Presbyterian villagers was quite tense in their daily lives.

The arrival of Catholicism brought extreme challenges to the people of Luntien. In the past, Catholics and Presbyterians were quite like cats and dogs who could not relate to each other. There could never be reconciliation between them, even though they belonged to the same family. They criticised each other as false Christians or Satan. They perceived each other's God as fake and they became enemies. The relationship was extremely bad (Chen 2004:47).

In short, it was religion, rather than ethnicity, that was highlighted at that period. The Bunun of Hualien County began to identify with their religious affiliation rather than their cultural and ethnic background. This resulted in the separation of the communities of Catholic Bunun and Presbyterian Bunun, in which religious affiliation was prioritised before ethnic or cultural identity. It is this schism that some well-educated Bunun and their supporters want to mend, with their focus on ethnic identity in the process of Taiwan's quest for a national identity. Furthermore, it has been driven by another rising concern, that of expressing indigenous identity in a nation seeking to separate itself from mainland China.

### **The Shift of National Identity: from China to Taiwan**

The indigenous peoples within the state of Taiwan have been called upon to construct or legitimise national identity. The Chinese Nationalist government lost the civil war in

mainland China and relocated to Taiwan in 1949. The Chinese Nationalist government insisted on its status as the sole legitimate representative of China, in opposition to the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese identity was the first national identity advocated by the Chinese Nationalist government, in the hope of legitimising its domination after its relocation in Taiwan. Taiwanese residents were taught to see themselves as Chinese at the expense of local cultures and languages.

The government also began a series of island-wide revolutionary projects to eliminate Japanese influences and to bind the island more firmly to the Chinese regime. Of these projects, the assimilation policy was intended to modernise the indigenous mountain people's lives and eventually transform them into Han Chinese (Chapter 2). Indigenous religious ideas and practices were especially perceived by the state as backward, lavish or extravagant, with a 'lack of economic outlook' (Harrison 2001:68) to be stamped out or reformed. In Hualien County, the practice of indigenous rituals or ceremonies was supervised by village officers, police officers and public health advisers (Chen 1954:41-42). As proposed by Ku, '[t]his call for modern citizenship for all already implied some cultural imperatives behind it' (2005:117). In short, Chinese ideology and the assimilation policy were the guidelines behind the regime's indigenous affairs, which resulted in rapid changes or loss of traditional indigenous cultures and languages.

With the growth of industrialisation and economic development in Taiwan from the 1960s, the indigenous peoples were forced into the capitalist economy, resulting in the downturn of their subsistence economy. They became itinerant or permanent urban migrants engaged in low-level physical labour, with consequent severe socio-economic suffering. A series of social problems related to indigenes occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, in 1984, the Hai-shan coal mine disaster killed

seventy-four people, most of whom were indigenes. This accident exposed the dangerous working conditions to which migrant indigenes were always subjected. In addition, a high percentage of young prostitutes reported in Hualien County were indigenous women, which revealed the problems of human-trafficking and the poor economic condition of the indigenous communities. The indigenous populations had long been marginalised and discriminated against by Taiwan's Han majority, until many of them were ashamed to identify themselves in terms of their ethnic identities, described by Hsieh as the 'stigmatized identity' (1987).

Conflicts arising from differences in cultures and ideologies among the ethnic groups lay below the surface. The intimate relationship between the aboriginal movement, Taiwan democratisation, and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan was examined by Ku (2005). She argues that '[t]he aboriginal rights movement (ARM) emerged within a larger opposition movement in the early 1980s, and it has been supported by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) through both its internal and external church networks' (2005:99). The establishment of the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (ATA) in December 1984 marked the formal launch of aboriginal rights in Taiwan. The emergence of the ATA can be seen as part of a larger oppositional movement that grew in the 1970s. It is particularly noteworthy that the major initiators during the formation of the ATA were the indigenous students from three Presbyterian seminaries.

Taiwan accelerated its process of democratisation in the 1980s and since then Taiwanese society has experienced rapid transformations. The ongoing quest for a new national identity was a controversial issue in the post-authoritarian period. The 'Chinese identity' which was the dominant ideology advocated by the Chinese Nationalist government was strongly contested by the local population after the lifting

of martial law in 1987. The emerging new Taiwanese identity initially stressed the indigenous Taiwanese cultural and historical uniqueness, in contrast to China.

This struggle over identity (Chinese versus Taiwanese) prompted the indigenes to put questions to the public: ‘Who was the real master of Taiwan before the Han came?’ and ‘What is the status of aborigines in the rising Han Taiwanese identity?’ These questions brought about a new perception of the indigenous cultures and history in the process of Taiwan’s quest for national identity. Indigenous cultures and history have come to be used as evidence of Taiwan’s difference from China. In short, the shift highlighted the centrality of indigenous cultures and history in the construction of a new Taiwan-centred identity.

This clearly appealed to ethnicity in building the Taiwanese national identity. As observed by Gutmann (2003:15), group identity and group interests tend to reinforce each other in a democratic society. By examining the social reconstruction of Taiwan’s identity, Wei-chin Lee argues that ‘the demand for a redistribution of resources and authority to “right the wrongs” of the past, mixed with ethnocentric beliefs, easily allows mass followers to find a sharp contrast between *us* and *them*’ (2005:40).

A shift of discourse from individual to collective rights arose with the rise of Taiwan democratisation and national identity consciousness. As Ku suggests, ‘[t]he individual’s right to be free from discrimination was superseded by the collective right to self-determination’ (2005:101). Early appeals focused on the concrete social concerns of indigenes (poverty, labour rights, housing, and education) and equal treatment against discrimination in mainstream society. By the time the Council of Aboriginal Affairs was established in 1996, the demand had shifted to a focus on the collective identity of indigenes as distinct groups.

The idea of the collective, and the politics of ethnicity, prompted the Bunun to rethink the internal separation between Catholics and Presbyterians. They perceived the need to be a united group which would transcend religious differences.

Consequently they attempted to revive a previously abandoned ancestral ritual, the Shooting the Ear ceremony, as a way to reunite the Catholic and Presbyterian Bunun villagers. The Bunun believed that by doing so, a new Bunun ethnic identity could be restructured.

### **Efforts to Regenerate the Ancestral Ritual**

The realities of social division and conflict rooted in differences of religious belief, however, had already been dealt with in an earlier decade. Inspired by his one-year overseas training experience at Tsurukawa Rural Seminary of Tokyo, Japan, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan became deeply involved in the forging of harmonious relations between Catholic and Presbyterian Bunun villagers. In the late 1980s, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan attempted to reconcile the Catholic and Presbyterian communities of Kufeng village. He worked with Dahu Tansikian, a Catholic villager who was later elected as Mayor of Chohsi Township, to reunite the villagers of Kufeng. The idea of ‘one heart’ in the Bible was the main argument he adopted as a way to facilitate reconciliation. He lamented what he perceived as a loss of unity among the Bunun after the arrival of Christianity.

In the past, we Bunun people always felt extreme pleasure when meeting Bunun from far away, even if we lived in different places such as Kaohsiung, Nantou, Taitung or Hualien. However, the gospel seemed to bring about confrontations and conflicts among the Bunun people. Although we congregate in different places and worship in different ways, we are worshipping the same God, and should treat each other peacefully. Does the

arrival of the cross aim to make people enemies? The Bible advocates ‘one heart’. We are doing wrong if we continue to see each other as rivals. How could it be that husbands and wives become rivals, the family becomes broken, and the tribe becomes disharmonious on the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Chen 2004:47)?

The two men advocated and persuaded the Bunun of Kufeng village to respect each other’s religion and to attend important life cycle ceremonies, such as marriage or funerals, regardless of religious differences. Villagers of Kufeng should be treated like family members, they asserted. Pastor Talima Nahaisulan took the lead by attending a Catholic villager’s funeral with his wife. Their appearance shocked both the Catholic and Presbyterian villagers. Presbyterians worried that their pastor would become Catholic, while the Catholics excitedly proclaimed that this demonstrated Catholicism was the true religion. Gradually, the strained relationship between the Catholic and Presbyterian communities began to improve. They realised they were worshiping the same God, although in different ways. One year later, the Catholic and Presbyterian churches of Kufeng village initiated an evening party to celebrate Christmas jointly (Chen 2004:48). This was the first time that the villagers had joined together. It is particularly noteworthy that although the party was based on their common belief in Jesus Christ, it was more recreational than sacred.

In 1996, the Bunun of Kufeng village turned to the ancestral ritual – the Shooting the Ear ceremony – as a guarantor of social unity and an ethnic marker. They were looking to the ancestral ritual because of the growing perception of the crucial role of indigenous cultures in the state’s construction of Taiwan’s national identity. As observed by Wang, ‘[a]boriginal culture, which had previously been viewed merely as tribal or local culture, thus became one of Taiwan’s “national cultures”’ (2004:307). The revival was conceived as a cutting-edge example of the regeneration project at a

time the restoration of tradition had gained ascendancy. It was premised on the idea that the practice of ancestral rituals would consolidate and restructure a new Bunun identity.

In 1996, the Hualien Cultural Centre (the forerunner of the Hualien County Cultural Affairs Bureau) launched a project called Holiday Cultural Plaza. The project propagated and preserved the beautiful ethnic traditions and culture of Hualien County, including traditional rituals or ceremonies, and folk singing or dancing. Ethnic groups of Hualien County were encouraged to apply for a small subsidy from the local government as support for demonstrating their traditional and thus authentic cultures. This prompted the Bunun to rethink the importance of ancestral culture in the construction of ethnic identity, with some people proposing the restoration of previously abandoned ancestral rituals as a way to transcend religious differences between Catholic and Presbyterian communities. They were convinced that the revitalisation of ancestral rituals would shift people's focus of identity from their religious affiliation – a source of rivalry – to their ethnicity – a force for unity. At the same time, it was the ancestral rituals rather than Christian festivals the state wished to revive. The former were perceived as original and authentic whereas the latter were seen as foreign impositions.

In 1996, two well-educated villagers of Kufeng in their forties applied to the Holiday Cultural Plaza project. Their educational qualifications had enabled them to attain relatively well-paying jobs and high social status. In effect, they already occupied the niche of affluent leadership in local Presbyterian communities. Their educational qualifications and high social status also helped them to mobilise more support from government administrative institutions and local communities. They

endeavoured to integrate Bunun ancestral rituals and Bunun identity to reunite villagers and display their distinctive culture to the outside world.

Given the absence of many other options, *Manahtangia*, the Shooting the Ear ritual, which had previously been performed at a family level, was selected. Although the initiators came from the Presbyterian churches, they recruited both Catholic and Presbyterian villagers into the organising committee. The village elders were honoured and awarded the title 'Doctors of Bunun Culture'. Although Pastor Talima Nahaisulan was considered a specialist in ancestral ritual knowledge, however, he did not confuse the issue by attending the ritual performance, but only served as a cultural consultant for it. The role of ritual leader was played by a Catholic elder who had once participated in the ritual when he was young. Those involved in these efforts believed that the long and beautiful ancestral heritage could be passed down in this manner.

On the surface, the revival appeared to be a Bunun cultural festival. The news of the ceremony was widely advertised and the participants included Bunun and non-Bunun. Audiences of other ethnic groups and journalists gathered to attend the authentic Bunun 'traditional' festival. With the hope of truly reviving the century-old ritual, the two initiators worked very hard to reconstruct a ritual they had never seen by combining bits and pieces from various sources. They interviewed elders, especially Pastor Talima Nahaisulan, who had garnered a reputation as an expert on Bunun ancestral culture. They also used the ethnographic materials published during the Japanese period. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1996 at Chofeng Primary School of Kufeng village, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, the *Manahtangia* festival was held for Bunun and others to enjoy.

To make this festival more educational, bilingual programmes in both romanised Bunun script and Mandarin were handed out on the day of the Shooting the Ear ritual. The festival schedule, a brief introduction of Kufeng village and the Shooting the Ear festival, and other related information were included in the programme. As stated in the text, the ritual was performed as follows:

The Shooting the Ear ritual is the Bunun's largest and most important ceremony of the year. All the Bunun subgroups practiced this ceremony, which was held at different times in accordance with the different altitudes of each settlement. It was always practiced after the weeding ceremony (*manatu*), a time of rest when the field work was done. The time of the ceremony was decided by the ritual leader. Because Kufeng village was composed of the Tak-banuaz and Bubukun subgroups, the ritual was usually held in early April.

All the adult males of the village prepared themselves to journey to their hunting grounds in the mountains when the moon began to wane. Before their departure, they purified their bodies and observed hunting taboos. The women left at home began to make millet wine (*kanavus*) and prayed to have good dreams at nights (*aiza taisah*).

Hunters returned home in the afternoon of the day before the Shooting the Ear ritual. They fired their guns into the air (*pacinghal*) on the top of the mountain and then sang songs together or by turns (*macilumah*) to inform people in the tribe... The whole valley echoed with the atmosphere of joy and abundance. People in the village were also caught up in the cheerful ambience.

On the day of the ritual, hunters got up in the early morning, upon hearing the first crow of the rooster. They took their beloved rifles and congregated in the ritual leader's courtyard to perform the Gun Worshipping Ritual. All the hunting gear was placed on

the ground and hunters squatted down beside the ritual leader. The ritual leader led hunters in a song called *pislahi* and prayed all animals would be shot by these guns and prayed for abundant game and the hunters' safety whenever they go hunting.

After worshipping the guns, all participants moved to the place where the animals' jaw bones were hanging and practiced the *mapatvis* ritual.<sup>22</sup> However, only the ritual leader and the hunter who had the best hunting record in the past year were eligible to enter. Others waited outside. The ritual leader propitiated the spirits of these hunted animals and requested them to bring more of their companions. After praying, the hunter hung the newly acquired jaw bones on the rack.

Subsequently, all residents of the tribe went to the ear-shooting square, where the target had already been set up. On a board, two deer ears were stuck on the top row, two roe ears on the middle row, and one goat ear and one boar ear on the bottom row. When the elder announced the commencement of the ear shooting, the elders shot at the ears first, and then boys took turns to shoot. If a boy was too young to shoot, he was assisted by his relative or elder of his family. After the boys finished shooting, it was the adults' turn to shoot. The target was set at around fifty meters. Those who failed to hit the target were teased.

During the Shooting the Ear ritual, women were barred from approaching or touching the hunting gear, and could only view the proceedings of the ritual from a distance.

After shooting the ear, it was time of *mapasitnul* or sharing the consecrated meat. It was important to count the exact number of participants, because it was perceived as an inauspicious omen if the amount of consecrated meat did not correspond to the number

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<sup>22</sup> The Bunun informants report that in the past the beheaded human skulls were stored in the ritual hut as well. A similar situation can be observed in Islituan's study (2009:76). However, in the middle period of Japanese rule, Japanese polices forced the Bunun to remove these human skulls from the ritual hut and bury them.

of participants...It would violate taboo if the meat were not cut equally, and disaster would follow. After the meat had been distributed, people began to drink, sing and perform *malastapang*, the Report of Heroic Deeds, until dark. The Bunun's largest and most important annual ceremony thus concluded perfectly.

The recollection of the processes of the Shooting the Ear ritual was drawn upon to plan the ritual schedule. A temporary hut made of bamboo and miscanthus grass was built in the centre of the playground of the local primary school as the ritual house. It was decorated with some animals jaws hung inside. Only the last program, *pasibutbut*, the Rich Millet Harvest Prayer Song<sup>23</sup>, was not originally performed in the ceremony; others followed the procedure as mentioned above.

Previous ethnographic records describe the performance of the Shooting the Ear ritual (Chiu 1966; Huang 1988; Sayama 2008[1919]), simple as it was, but the description above reveals some prominent Bunun pre-Christian religious ideas that need to be further explained. It is these ideas that contradict Christian beliefs and cause disputes among local communities.

## **Contested Understanding of the Ritual**

The recognition of the spirits is a major source of contention. *Manahtangia*, the Shooting the Ear ritual, is a window onto the Bunun pre-Christian cosmology, by which a variety of the Bunun pre-Christian religious ideas are revealed.

The spoken word is of great significance among the Bunun. People are convinced that any words uttered become contracts with spiritual consequences beyond the

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<sup>23</sup> *Pasibutbut*, the Rich Millet Harvest Prayer Song, expresses hope for the millet to grow and provide a plentiful harvest. In the past, it was sung between the period of the Planting and Weeding Ceremony, around January to March (Wu 1993:96). It has become a well-known Bunun as well as Taiwan indigenous song due to its unique polyphonic choral singing. The Bunun are frequently invited to perform this song for a wide range of occasions today.

control of the human speakers and listeners (Mabuchi 1987[1974]). Inappropriate words can disturb or imbalance social and spiritual relationships, whereas appropriate speech may restore them. As mentioned in a previous chapter, eloquence was the major qualification of the pre-Christian ritual practitioners who were the intermediaries between humans and invisible spiritual beings. In *Manahtangia*, the spirits of animals are called, propitiated and requested at the ritual of *mapatvis* (making offering to animals' spirits), and *pacinsapuz* (fire making) ritual. The efficacy of the ritual depends on the ritual practitioners' spoken words in negotiating or bargaining with spirits for the practical well-being of the living.

Asides from ritual words, it is equally crucial to pay attention to the music and song lyrics presented during the ritual. In essence, the lyrics retain their potent spiritual powers. In practising *pislahi* (the Gun Worshipping Ritual), all adult males invoke the spirits of animals killed by these weapons to bring their family and friends to be shot by the Bunun in the future. The ritual speech and song lyrics in *Manahtangia* are ritual procedures to augment both the hunting results and human fertility of the group.

The initiators of the ritual recognised that some of ritual procedures, such as making offerings to spirits, or speaking to or calling spirits, violated Christianity's one God policy. However, they eschewed the contradictions by reinterpreting their meaning or just saw the spirits they worshipped as the Christian God. For example, Pastor Talima Nahaisulan explained, the *pacinsapuz* ritual, literally 'making-fire' ritual, refers to passing the flame from generation to generation; while the *pislahi* (the Gun Worshipping Ritual) is to express hunters' gratitude to God for providing them with bountiful game and their prayer for future prosperity.

The close relation between the *Manahtangia* ritual and the *hanitu* (spirits) was brought to people's attention by a serious accident which happened afterwards. After the festival ended, a farm wagon overturned on its way home, and the driver and passenger were seriously injured. Three stones used as the stove in the ritual hut, which were being carried on the farm wagon, fell out with the overturning of the wagon and hit a passing motorcyclist.

The villagers wondered how this accident could happen if God was in control and the spirits had been driven away. They gossiped about the cause of the misfortune. Some people suggested that during the revival the 'actors' had summoned and prayed to spirits as in the past, but failed to propitiate or send them away properly. Others commented that the person who played the ritual leader was not qualified, as his power was not sufficient to channel the spirits and then send them away. Only a small number of villagers fought against such narratives of spiritual influences and argued that this was only an accident due to drunk-driving, with no relationship to *hanitu*. In general, nearly all possible causes of these misfortunes were attributed by villagers to the spirits. This gossip underscored the centrality of spirits, and the fear of provoking them, that shaped their perception of relationships between humans and the spirits.

Despite the very first revival of *Manahtangia* ritual being overshadowed by spirit-related accidents, the revival was widely accepted by other Bunun villagers of the region as a way to reconcile the Catholic and Presbyterian communities and to restructure a Bunun identity. In addition, the collaboration of the state and the Bunun enabled the ceremony to continue year after year and to prosper as a reinterpretation and accommodation of the traditional ritual in the new social context. The main concerns illustrated in the revival are reconciliation of Christian divisions and restructuring of Bunun identity.

## The Church Response

The controversial debates regarding the spirits generated two responses from the churches. The Presbyterian pastors debated among themselves whether *Manahtangia* contained pre-Christian religious components or was mere popular festival. Although no Catholic or Presbyterian pastors of Kufeng village were openly against the revival of the Shooting the Ear festival, they excluded themselves from a festival designated as a 'traditional ritual'. They were willing to support the festival as long as there were no prayers to the spirits, and this response from the churches did have an impact upon the performance of the *Manahtangia* festival. The following year when I returned to Kufeng to attend the festival, I discovered that controversial procedures such as speaking or praying to the spirits, which Bunun believed would invoke the arrival of spirits, had been abandoned or modified. For instance, when the ritual leader roasted the consecrated meat on the fire he no longer spoke. Much of the attention had shifted to the recreational elements of the festival.

The performance of the Shooting the Ear festival continues to evolve. In recent years, it has become a huge Bunun cultural event, and much of the growth of this event has been due to the collaboration of the government and the Bunun political leaders. As the only 'traditional' Bunun ceremony practiced in a contemporary social context, it is now held not only on a community or village basis, but even at township and national levels. Nowadays the ritual is always held first by the settlement or village, followed by a united festival including different villages of a township. Finally, a national Shooting the Ear festival, including all the Bunun of different regions is performed. This festival has become an emblem of Bunun culture in official publications, tourist brochures, and on many websites in Taiwan. Moreover, it has become the only officially sanctioned Bunun traditional calendrical ritual, as

recognised by the Ministry of Interior on 2 November, 2010. This means that the Shooting the Ear festival is now recognised as a public holiday for the Bunun people, to encourage their participation.

The Shooting the Ear festival at the township or national level looks very much like a cultural performance. However, this is not always the case at the settlement or village level. In Luntien, the Shooting the Ear festival of 2010 represented an innovation in which the festival was adapted and some elements added. The festival was hosted by a local institution – the Luntien Community Development Association, with Cina Puni as the head of the association.<sup>24</sup> She retired several years previously from public service and had since dedicated herself to community works. Her previous working experience and relationship with government officials enabled her to get official funding with ease. The funding of the 2010 *Manahtangia* was provided by the Indigenous Peoples Department of the Hualien County, as part of a project aimed to revive the folk art, folk craftsmanship, and traditional calendrical rituals of the indigenous peoples.

The news of the *Manahtangia* was announced publicly over the loudspeaker one early morning of April. There were two innovations that year. First, the people of the Shihping settlement<sup>25</sup> joined the Luntien and Hsiuluan people in performing the festival. Second, villagers of different districts or settlements were also requested to perform a traditional ritual in the ceremony. This was a direct response to the criticism made by some villagers who had objected that in previous years that the festival had become a recreational activity or even a time for drinking and amusement.

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<sup>24</sup> Although entitled as Luntien, the membership of the Luntien Community Develop Association in fact includes the Luntien and Hsiuluan residents.

<sup>25</sup> Shihping is the southernmost settlement of Kufeng village. The distance between Luntien and Shihping is around eight kilometres.

Two weeks before the day of the festival, during a Sunday service, Bisazu Nahaisulan, a church elder of the Luntien Presbyterian Church, stood up and said:

I am sincerely inviting all of you, my dear brothers and sisters to participate in the upcoming *Manahtangia* festival. This ceremony is passed down by my ancestors. We can appreciate ourselves as a Bunun people by following the path of our ancestors. This is also a community event. No matter what religion you are, we are all Bunun people.

After Bisazu Nahaisulan finished his announcement, the pastor stood up and encouraged the congregation to attend the ‘traditional’ Bunun festival as well. At the same time, he stated that excessive alcohol consumption was not Christian behaviour.

On the surface, it appeared that the festival had earned the support from the local Presbyterian Church, however the support was conditional. Several days after the Sunday service, I finally had a chance to interview the pastor of the Luntien Presbyterian Church about the revival of ancestral ritual. He responded by saying: ‘It is not allowed if *Manahtangia* is a “ritual” but it is very welcome if it is a traditional “festival” with no religious implications’. He acknowledged that Bisazu Nahaisulan visited him the previous week and solicited permission from him to preside over the festival. As the newly elected head of Tribal Affairs of the Luntien and Hsiuluan settlement, Bisazu Nahaisulan was expected to perform as the ritual leader of the festival. Afraid of the contradiction of his roles as a Christian, a church elder and the ritual leader of *Manahtangia*, he resorted to the pastor for the answer. The pastor replied that it was fine to attend the traditional cultural activity as long as there were no prayers to the spirits.

To avoid reviving the pre-Christian idea of the spirits during the festival, the pastor of the Luntien Presbyterian Church proposed separating religion from culture. In his definition, religion is all about the Christian faith which is the guideline for its believers, while the pre-Christian practices, including songs, costumes, or customs, are regarded as tradition which is acceptable as long as the spiritual attributes have been stripped away or been reinterpreted in terms of Christian beliefs. He told me that in his opinion the pre-Christian Bunun history, customs, or culture parallels the Old Testament of the Bible. It should be preserved, as it is associated with the Bunun's origin and ethnic identity.



Figure 9 The Shooting the Ear Festival, May 1, 2010

The separation of religion and culture was observed in the Shooting of the Ear festival of 2010, held at the Luntien Assembly Centre, built several years before by the

Township government as a venue for such traditional activities. The festival began by introducing every official, followed by a speech from Cina Puni, who was the host of the festival. She spoke in Bunun and emphasised that *Manahtangia* is traditional Bunun culture passed down from generation to generation.

After the opening plenary, it was time for the traditional festival, in which the *Manahtangia*, *Pasibutbut* (the Rich Millet Harvest Prayer Song) and other rituals were performed. Bisazu Nahaisulan was the leader of the program. At the beginning, he briefly introduced the origin, meaning and procedure of the ceremony by reading from notes. Later on he told me he was taught by Pastor Talima Nahaisulan about the ceremony and had written all the details down. During the entire program Pastor Talima Nahaisulan stood beside Bisazu Nahaisulan like a supervisor. He interrupted the ritual procession at times by adding extra explanations or correcting incorrect movements of the participants. This made the performance look very much like a rehearsal in which correct knowledge was being taught in the process.

After his introduction, two men wearing traditional sleeveless jackets and outfits came from the audience with rifles in hand. They fired the guns into the air to herald the opening of the festival. About thirteen adult males came out and gathered in the centre. They squatted down in a circle, with three guns placed on the ground in the circle. Bisazu Nahaisulan stood up in the circle and explained the meaning of *pislahi* (the Gun Worshipping Ritual) by reading the note instead of practicing the ritual. Then a fire was made, the number of the participants was counted, the meat was cut and roasted above the fire, then distributed to the participants. There was no word to the spirits. What Bisazu Nahaisulan did was to perform the ceremony without engaging in the spiritual sphere through ritual practice.

Next came the shooting, boys and male attendees shot the target, a piece of paper with a wild boar's picture, using bow and arrows. Then the male participants returned to the centre of the venue. Women joined in the festival by singing. This was followed by the last stage of the ceremony, in which all participants stood up, gathered in a circle and held hands. They conducted a song called *pasibutbut*, the Rich Millet Harvest Prayer Song. According to Bisazu Nahaisulan's explanation, it was, in the past, a prayer to *Dihanin* (the Father of the Heaven) for the millet to grow and provide a bountiful harvest.

The different districts' performances began soon after the *Manahtangia* was finished. The 'bottom' district of Luntien practiced the *masuhaulus* ritual, or the celebration of the birth of the newborn baby, while villagers of the 'middle' and 'top' districts joined together to practice the millet harvest ritual.<sup>26</sup> The residents of Hsiuluan performed the planting ritual and the people of Shihping performed the *kabalivan* ceremony for blessing the newborn. Before each performance, a person gave a brief introduction to the meaning of the ceremony they practiced and its related taboos. They hoped by doing so to give their performances more cultural meaning. After the performances, came recreation. People sang karaoke, drank alcohol and ate together to enjoy their festival.

It is particularly noteworthy that there were no 'foreign' attendees of this ceremony except myself, and the Bunun language, untranslated, was used for the whole day. I observed the villagers' great excitement with the performance. They were ritual performers as well as audience. The 'old rituals' were performed by and for themselves. The ancestral rituals were incarnated as emblems of Bunun culture even

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<sup>26</sup> The Luntien community is divided into three districts, bottom, middle and top, in accordance with the region.

though everybody was now Christian. By representing the traditional rituals, the local people presented themselves as Bunun, although the form, meaning and original contexts of these rituals had changed dramatically. The people with whom I lived were interested in the Bunun ‘traditional culture’ and through the efforts of local elites and the state a new social domain – the traditional – was formulated. The new domain of tradition offered the Bunun a way to demonstrate their ethnic identity. Even though the traditional ceremonies or rituals performed were removed from the original social contexts, they were revitalised in these new social contexts.

This view, however, did not go uncontested, and the division between religion and culture was a source of ongoing tension in the region. Many Bunun people continued to believe in the power of these spirits in all aspects of life and argued the impossibility of separating religion and culture. They still believed in the possibility that this festival would engage the spirits. This included Cina Umav (as discussed in the previous chapter) who also spoke strongly about the spirit-based nature of the festival. She persuaded some Christians not to attend the festival even though it was called a ‘cultural event’. She protested that all pre-Christian Bunun culture was associated with the backward past. Moreover, she proposed that the so-called Bunun culture was anti-Christian as it did not derive from the Bible and should be completely discarded.

Thus, rather than binding the Bunun of different religious affiliations together, a new distinction was drawn between them in terms of the revival of ancestral ceremony. I heard from Presbyterian ministers that the revival of *Manahtangia* disturbed them. The relationship between Presbyterian and non-Presbyterian villagers was very tense in a nearby Bunun village, where from early in the preparation period, the Presbyterian members held special prayers in the evenings. They suggested that the non-Presbyterian villagers’ behaviours, such as praying to or calling on the spirits, had

put the entire village in jeopardy. A Presbyterian member of that village reported to me that this danger was evidenced by the villagers who died every time after the *Manahtangia* ritual. He believed that it was the Catholic and pagan villagers who had brought the evil spirits to their village by practicing the Shooting the Ear festival. These misfortunes were attributed to malicious attacks by the spirits, who had retreated far from human territory after the coming of God, but had been summoned back by the ceremony. Thus Presbyterian villagers prayed to God for protection against evil spirits summoned during the practice of the festival.

Religion and culture have thus become associated with two broadly opposing worldviews among the Bunun. Nevertheless, I suggest the tension between these worldviews need not be experienced as overt conflict, as Bunun value and draw upon both religion and culture within the context of everyday life. For example, most Bunun people I knew viewed being Christian as a highly positive form of identity, while, at the same time, the core of daily life was inextricably bound up in the beliefs, rituals, and practices of culture.

## Conclusion

This chapter has investigated efforts to regenerate an ancestral ritual – *Manahtangia*, or the Shooting the Ear festival – among the Bunun people in Hualien County of eastern Taiwan, as part of the process in Taiwan begun in the 1980s to forge a national identity. Some well-educated Bunun attempted to revive the previously defunct calendrical ceremony in the hope of consolidating Bunun Catholic and Presbyterian communities and restructuring a united Bunun ethnic identity. Those involved in these efforts were convinced that a revival of ancestral rituals would shift people's focus of

identity from their religion to their ethnicity. They hoped this shift in focus would ease the religious tensions that had tortured the region from the mid-1950s.

In introducing the notion of ‘invention of tradition’, Hobsbawm contends that “[t]raditions” which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented’ (1983a:1). Furthermore, the intentions of these inventions include ‘establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities’ (*ibid*:9). The use of reified tradition as a political or identity symbol has been widely discussed by scholars (Jolly and Thomas 1992; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Lindstrom and White 1993). Situating the revival of tradition in the contexts of state appropriation and the development of ethnic tourism, Yang (2011) shows that the reconstitution of tradition was taken by the Bunun of Vulvul as a strategy to control their relationship with the state and the dominant society. She proposes a new understanding of tradition as a culturally specific mode of change. In the revival, the Bunun local identity and sociality were maintained by means of the reproduction of the concept of personhood (2011:316).

In this chapter I argue that although the state brought in resources and encouraged the construction of an indigenous identity desired by the Bunun, it also increased the potential for conflict. In the revival of ‘tradition’, Bunun again prayed to spirits as in the past, and the misfortunes that occurred soon after the end of ceremony prompted villagers to blame the poor relationship between humans and spirits. This generated two responses from the churches. In Luntien, the Catholic priest and Presbyterian pastor were willing to support the festival as long as there were no prayers to the spirits. So the ritual was categorised as culture, not religion. This emphasised the way in which religion had become a separate domain in Bunun lives, as conceived by the state and the established churches. However, in another nearby Bunun village, Presbyterian

villagers held special prayers to God for protection from the spirits summoned by their ‘backward’ neighbours. This included Cina Umav who spoke strongly against the spirit-based nature of the festival. She strongly prohibited her followers from participating in the event, even though this was regarded as a cultural activity.

This example of the tensions generated during the revival of the Shooting the Ear festival cannot be attributed simply to debates about ‘authenticity’, but instead represent the perhaps inevitable conflict that accompanies initiatives for change in a society in which the spirits remain the focus. While the revival aimed to consolidate and restructure the Bunun identity, it inevitably worked to highlight the existence of the spirits in people’s daily lives, despite insistence by the institutional churches that spirits could be excluded from ancestral rituals transformed into cultural performances. Many Bunun continue to believe in the power of those spirits in all aspects of life.

It is clear that the reality of ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’ among the Bunun of Hualien County is very different from the static and harmonious image conjured by the post-authoritarian state of Taiwan. Rather it exists in terms of social dynamics that are characterised by tensions and conflicts. Because the idea of culture contains both the united and separate characteristics, the revival of ancestral rituals can work in either way. The revival might bring people together by encouraging them to practice ancestral rituals as a community, but it also can pull people apart by creating new distinctions.

# Conclusion

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‘We have always been Christians’ the Bunun people frequently pronounce, affirming their lasting relationship with Christianity from the ancient past to the present. They claim that the Dutch introduced them to Christianity in the seventeenth century, as evidenced in the many similarities between Christianity and their mythic stories, religious ideas and practices. The Bunun assert the so-called ‘conversion’ was, in fact, a return to a more ‘authentic’ or ‘ancient’ culture. Furthermore, traditional Bunun culture did indeed originate from Christianity and was encompassed in it. Clearly, these statements indicate that the Bunun claim a sense of continuity through their adoption of Christianity.

‘Continuity thinking’ (Robbins 2007), however, is complicated by another prominent set of discourses and practices of discontinuity. In addition to maintaining and even forging new connections with old religious ideas and practices, the Bunun people simultaneously advocate rupture from them. Many Bunun Christians distinguish between their lives before and after their acceptance of Christianity. They state that Christianity freed them from a dark, fearful, spirit-worshipping past, and assert that life after accepting Christianity is free and secure.

There is then at the core of these narratives an apparent paradox between continuity and discontinuity characterising many Bunun Christians’ engagement with Christianity. What should we make of the ongoing relationships between Bunun traditional religious ideas and practices and Christianity in the process of evangelisation? As I have shown in this thesis, this is not merely a theoretical challenge for anthropologists, but a very real social, moral, and religious quandary for the Bunun people.

Additionally, at the start of the thesis, I note that the population of Bunun Presbyterians and Catholics is dropping. In regard to the situation of Protestant community in Taiwan, I suggest that it is valuable to refer to Allen Swanson's two books. The first, *The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980: A Review of the Past, A Projection of the Future* (1981), and the second, *Mending the Nets: Taiwan Church Growth and Loss in the 1980's* (1986). These books reveal the state of the Protestant, mainline, plains churches of Taiwan (the indigenous churches were excluded) based on the analysis of statistic data. Both of the books uncovered the obstacles the Protestant community faced and suggested what steps might be taken to inspire the Protestant community. Swanson argues that previous research concerning the development of Christian church has a fundamental shortcoming as '[p]eople were supposed to enter churches. None had formerly discussed why they left!' (1986:2). Focusing on the cause of the decline of church growth, Swanson proposes that these churches share the deeply disturbing problem that he has termed 'the back door'. This means that whatever gains are made in new membership are negated by the loss of members who move away from a church that no longer meets their spiritual needs.

Why is the population of Bunun Presbyterians and Catholics declining? Some members of these churches are shifting to other Christian denominations, joining Han Chinese folk religion, or returning to their traditional religious practices. I therefore propose that the decline in membership of Presbyterian and Catholic churches needs to be considered in references to Bunun attitudes toward spirits.

This thesis discusses the evolution of religious beliefs and practices, and the people's emerging conceptualisations of relations with the spiritual. Christianity, like any other religion, is not just a spiritual or ritual activity, but has a range of dimensions: spiritual, political, social and moral. By examining the process of indigenisation, this

thesis addresses the ways in which Christian and indigenous religious beliefs and practices were adopted and appropriated at different stages. The encounter between Christian principles and Bunun ancestral cosmology revealed how the Bunun have reconceptualised their spiritual sphere and adapted their relationships with, and attitudes toward, ancestral and Christian ways. This has had both political, social and moral dimensions. Politically, Christianity has been used by the Bunun people to distinguish themselves from the Han people, enabling them to construct a Bunun identity in the new socio-political context. Morally, Christianity has provided an alternative means to restore relationships between the dead and the living, especially during the early evangelistic period.

Socially, Bunun have forged relationships within distinct denominations of Christianity. In more recent times, new tensions emerged when church officials endeavoured to purge Bunun elements within Christian beliefs and practices, in the hope of replacing them with more ‘orthodox’ ones. For the reformers, Bunun traditional religious ideas are the work of the devil and need to be put aside. Consequently, church officials and their supporters set themselves in opposition to the Bunun majority who have always believed that their ancestral beliefs and ideas are the same as, similar to, or generally commensurate with Christianity. This majority of Bunun Christians have remained intent on crafting a relationship of continuity between pre-Christian beliefs and Christianity.

Many scholars have demonstrated that indigenous peoples have reshuffled their existing traditional practices and beliefs in a way that makes them Christian, yet simultaneously shapes that Christianity so that it satisfies and perpetuates existing indigenous religious motivations and outlooks. The process of interaction between Christianity and indigenous religions has thus mutually transformed indigeneity and

Christianity as they have adjusted to each other. My thesis expands upon that insight to show that the interactions of Christian ideas and indigenous ones have changed constantly within a context of extensive social change.

Religious practices and beliefs are changing all the time. As Aragon argues, '[r]eligions, even world religions, do not have an existence apart from congregations and the social flux in which those communities live' (2000:320). Through analysing Bunun evangelistic history, I investigate how elements of belief and practice are abandoned or retained, but with continual modification. I am interested in suggesting why it is that some elements get abandoned and others retained, and what it is that drives the modifications and refashionings. My argument is that the Bunun people's desire to maintain continuity with their pre-Christian ways, as well as the minority's refusal to do so, derives not only from the processes of Christianisation, but also from their experiences with the ethnic, political, and cultural politics of Taiwan, from the end of the Second World War to the present.

In exploring the processes of transformation, I outline two different accounts of Bunun Christianity. On the one hand, Ying-kuei Huang (1988, 1992), who studied the Bunun of Tongpu, a relatively small settlement in central Taiwan, noted that they had experienced radical religious changes from their ancestral beliefs to Presbyterian Christianity. However, he pointed out that the incorporation of Christianity occurred in the absence of any mixing with the existing Bunun cultural framework. Christianity was not appropriated in such a way as to adapt it to Bunun culture, and conversion left many aspects of indigenous culture intact. As similarly noted by Joel Robbins (2004), Huang claims that the relationship between Christianity and indigenous religion was not syncretic but contradictory (1988:315). Christianity was superimposed on

indigenous Bunun religious practices, while pre-existing cultural ideas, such as the concept of the person, continued to thrive beneath.

Huang's main concern was not with the mutual construction between indigenous and Christian religious beliefs and practices, but more about why and how the Tongpu Bunun converted to Christianity in the first place. He argued that they converted to Christianity as an alternative way of restoring the proper relationship between humans and the spiritual world. The primary factor drawing the Tongpu Bunun towards Christianity was a concern for practical well-being that could be better attained through adoption of Christianity.

The findings of my research among the Bunun of Eastern Taiwan support some of Huang's conclusions. In particular, this thesis confirms his central claim that concern with the acquisition of practical well-being played a key role in motivating the Bunun to convert to Christianity, and continues to inform their contemporary Christian beliefs. The practical welfare provided by Christianity was certainly perceived by local people as a direct index of superior religious power, and compelled them toward Christianity. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates how the indigenous preoccupation with generating practical well-being through ritual means persists within contemporary Bunun Christianity. However, the weakness of this explanation is that it abstracts Christianity and Bunun religion as separate entities. Christianity was not adopted in such a way as to leave Bunun cosmology unchanged. Huang claimed that Bunun people consider themselves Christians while continuing to respect many of the values of their indigenous beliefs.

Contrasted with Huang's explanation of local Christianity is that offered by Shu-yuan Yang (2001, 2006, 2009) for the Bunun people of Vulvul and Ququaz villages, in the mountains of eastern and central Taiwan. Yang pointed out that they

always stressed that their ancestral religion and Christianity relate to the same God. This has become important in their acceptance and accommodation with Christianity because ‘the continuity between Bunun traditional religion and Christianity is commonly regarded as the most important reason why the latter took strong hold among the Bunun’ (2009:219). Therefore, the Bunun people have incorporated Christianity into their tradition by displaying a seamless process of transformation.

By ‘taking seriously the religious experience of others’ (Cannell 2006:3), Yang has demonstrated a rather different approach to that taken by Ying-kuei Huang. Huang, from an observer’s viewpoint, takes it for granted that the Christian God is different from Bunun concept of *hanitu* or *dihanin*. Therefore, once the Christian God was accepted by the Bunun, subsequent radical changes became inevitable. This premise, the putative difference, overshadows the possibility of asserting a transformation between pre-Christian and Christian cosmologies. The continuities are obviously what the Bunun people whom Yang studied aimed to assert. The Bunun claimed that their ancestors taught the same morality as the missionaries, a message of respectful and compassionate behaviour. In addition, the use of the Bunun word *dihanin* to refer the Christian God also invited people to perceive the parallel between *dihanin* and the Christian God. The Bunun termed the Christian God as *Tama Dihanin*, God the Father, as they were the same (Yang 2009).

Although Huang and Yang maintain different perspectives regarding the relationship between the Bunun pre-Christian and Christian beliefs and practices, they confirm that there has been a trope of continuity as a prominent characteristic of Bunun life. Put differently, this shows that Bunun tropes, practices, and experiences of continuity are real and significant in Bunun daily lives.

As mentioned earlier in this conclusion, the Bunun Christians of eastern Taiwan largely concur that conversion has entailed breaking away from the past and traditional customs. Indeed, Christianity made great changes in the social and natural landscapes of Bunun society. However, that sense of discontinuity is simultaneously alleviated by a strong and pervasive sense of continuity with the ancestral ways. With the exception of a few church officials and religious leaders (such as Cina Umav), most Bunun Christians do not subscribe to the rupture-oriented discourses that Robbins (2007) identifies as so central to Christian doctrine and experience.

This thesis has focused on an ethnographic puzzle: why have the majority of Bunun Christians in eastern Taiwan sought to maintain and construct a continued connection with their pre-Christian culture? The Bunun claim that their pre-Christian traditions and Christianity are the same, and thus suggest that this is the main reason for their acceptance of Christianity, but I suggest that this statement is perhaps unlikely by comparing Bunun traditions and Christianity in the contexts in which they interacted. By examining Bunun evangelistic history, I demonstrate that processes of continuity and discontinuity are both relevant. Take the concept of *dihanin*, for example. I suggest the contemporary meaning of *dihanin* is the product of historical development. As explained in Chapters 1 and 3, the concept of *dihanin* seemed to play a less conspicuous role than the idea of *hanitu* (spirit) in pre-Christian Bunun social life. It referred to the sky and the power of various celestial phenomena such as wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. People resorted to this power in times of natural disaster or when being treated unjustly. Most of the time, however, *dihanin* was perceived as a force defining morality rather than a personified deity. Yet in the myth of the introduction of the millet crop, *dihanin* became personified and explained the need for moral relations with sky beings, and the possibility of such relationships being severed

(Chapter 1). Subsequently, the idea of *dihanin* changed under the influence of colonialism. Near the end of the Japanese period, the introduction of the personified Shinto deity commenced a process of transformation in relation to *dihanin* (Chapter 3). Furthermore, the personified *dihanin* facilitated Bunun acceptance of the Christian God, which led to the Bunun perception equating *dihanin* with God. However, this realisation did not take place until a series of struggles with Han Taiwanese missionaries had been resolved during the process of translating the Bible into Bunun (Chapter 4). In recent times, new ideas brought in by Pentecostal Christianity have introduced a greater intimacy with God, or *Tama Dihanin* (Chapter 6).

I suggest the processes of what we call displacement, mixing, or synthesis are very complicated. Perhaps the most salient point deriving from this thesis is that we cannot really perceive continuity as being opposed to discontinuity. The Bunun example shows that continuity and discontinuity take place at the same time. My object in this thesis is not to favour either continuity or discontinuity as an explanation of religious change, nor to incorporate Bunun discourses into an overarching argument for or against continuity. Rather, to gain a better understanding of the mutual constitution of Christianity and Bunun culture, I suggest that we approach this question by combining the exegetical and historical perspectives.

The main finding of this research is that the accommodation between Bunun and Christian religious ideas and practices is evolving as their socio-political milieus change. As a result, the study of Christianisation should examine what makes some Christian elements more amenable to adoption than others. The study of indigenisation is not only to see what has changed or been preserved, a debate that would engulf scholars in never-ending discourses about continuity and discontinuity, as though it must be either one or the other, but also to focus on the articulation of Christian and

native cultural elements at any given time within the wider social and political environment in which the Bunun are placed. However, we cannot continue to differentiate between what is Christian and what is native in Bunun Christianity today. Their engagement with Christian agents, ideas and practices over the decades has rather brought Bunun to various syntheses of what were once separate Christian and native elements, with the result that in the present day these elements can no longer be defined as one or the other. Thus *Dihanin* is both Christian and native, yet it corresponds to neither of the earlier concepts of the Bunun nor of the Christian missionary. This thesis has, therefore, shown that Bunun conversion to Christianity has been a complex and encompassing process. Here I reiterate several key ingredients of the argument outlined in the introduction, and expand upon their significance.

In the Bunun history of colonial occupation and missionisation they were not looking to identify with the colonisers, as in many missionary situations, but to differentiate themselves. In that historical situation, what foreign missionaries had to offer was not colonial mastery but an alternate form of strength. As a result, they looked not to the colonial master missionary, but to local evangelists to direct the early adoption of Christian churches.

For the Bunun, Christian conversion was seen as returning to their roots. The declaration of returning to much earlier roots was a counterbalance to Han superiority and also a sidelining of contemporary missionaries. This proclamation contested the understanding of Christian expansion as a religion spread by white or Western people to the vulnerable people of the rest of an unwilling globe. The Christian messages were *mamantuk* 'true' to the Bunun. The early explosion in Christian membership represented less a mass conversion to a different identity than a consolidation of Bunun

political separation within a competitively global Christian identity where they were able to assert their ethnic rights.

However, politics is only half the story. If it were just politics, the Bunun people might have followed the missionaries' interpretation of Christianity more closely. But, as with any people adopting elements of belief and practice from beyond their own cultural domain, the Bunun responded most enthusiastically to elements that made sense within their own cultural purview. Foreign missionaries did not have to convince the Bunun audiences of the reality of spirits and spiritual powers. For them the spiritual was and is based on direct relationships with the spirits who provide practical well-being to their human kin. Their initial incorporation of Christianity was in terms of reciprocity with the new spirits introduced by Christian teachings, and the experience of healing was central to their commitment to these new relationships. The 'God' *Dihanin* was more remote and impersonal as indeed it had always been in former beliefs. Their commitment to the new church was less in terms of their concept of the Godhead than the experience of a relationship with spiritual beings, something which came to annoy following generations of Bunun theological graduates who attempted to 'straighten' the way for their Bunun followers.

The question of how far Bunun Christians should go in renouncing ideas as they are currently practiced remains contentious within local Christian communities, between Presbyterian and Catholic villagers, church officials and Bunun Christians, and the old and young Presbyterian pastors. The main dispute here is about the Bunun relationship with spirits. For example, as illustrated in Chapter 5, Presbyterian officials attempted to cut the close bond between ancestral spirits and the living. These proscriptions greatly annoyed villagers because the maintenance of proper relationships with the spirits of the deceased is crucial to people's practical welfare.

Thus, most villagers have adapted to this quandary through distancing themselves from received Christian teachings. This clash also reveals the ongoing development of beliefs and practices.

The third theme is the growth and decline of formal church membership. Bunun Christianity initially began as a grassroots and a youth movement. In the early days of Bunun integration of Christian ways within their social practices, spirit mediums were the catalyst, but young men provided much of the educated leadership to establish Christian churches. However, their membership in the Presbyterian Church, as fealty to outside authorities, has never entirely been accepted by the majority of Bunun. In distinction to these later Bunun theologians Bunun pastors continue to assert their independence, as in more recent times the emergence of new spirit mediums and youth expressions of resistance have challenged the imposition of Presbyterian purity onto Bunun liturgical and theological practices. The present generation of youth points out the failure of pastors in maintaining balanced relationships between people and spirits, and as a result reject institutionalised religious practice altogether. The threat to the established church has once again shown how central spirit experience, rather than theological conformity, is to Bunun practice.

This raises new questions about the direction that Bunun practices will take in the future. As with previous generations, the young married men and women will provide much of this direction. With declining church attendance and membership, it is not yet clear whether the younger generation will direct their energies to new spiritual movements associated with emerging Christian mediums, or will identify more strongly with a much more secular trend in the wider society, where Bunun identity will take a minor place against the identities forged through modern employment and consumerism.

In this thesis, I have outlined a process of religious development among the Bunun people in eastern Taiwan. Locating Bunun conversion within a larger historical framework, I describe conversion as a spiritual, political, social, material, and moral process in a complex, and not always unproblematic, relationship. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this study of Christian integration into Bunun society provides a small but intriguing microcosm of conversion stories worldwide. In this regard, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on the peculiar forms and trajectories that religious change and transformation can take.

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