

LAIPUNUK (NEI BEN LU) – THE LAST FRONTIER OF THE TAIWAN ABORIGINES DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION ON TAIWAN: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES OF A BUNUN ELDER

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ABSTRACT

The Bunun are one of the indigenous groups of Taiwan that have a rich history of living in the high-mountains. The region of Laipunuk (Nei Ben Lu) was once a group of mountain villages and among the last frontier areas to be annexed into Imperial Japan in Taiwan. The remoteness of the region, coupled with the late arrival of Japanese forces, afforded the Bunun children of that time to have a lifestyle, where they participated in and observed their indigenous way of life. This research is an oral ethnography of Langus Istanda, born in 1920, remembering first hand the arrival of the Japanese police and experienced the forced extradition of her family from their region. The research finds that the informant's childhood memories are generally positive, inasmuch as she tells stories of games, adventures, a safe and comfortable environment, and a sense of wonder for the modernity of the Japanese culture; yet her memories move to a negative tone regarding the forced relocations and the period of illness and death of friends and relatives. The research indicates that the Laipunuk Bunun have endured constant pressure from external forces and, as a direct result, have undergone acute social, cultural, and linguistic degradation from the loss of their native homelands. This study contributes to an understanding of the value of cultural resource management by providing an objective and comprehensive record for future generations; it opens a pathway to Laipunuk and Bunun

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epistemology in the English language. Ultimately, the study proved to be mutually beneficial to both researcher and participant, offering extensive source of information as well as a sense of reconciliation to the Bunun elders; it represents the resilience of Bunun heritage.

Keywords: Laipunuk, Bunun, Taiwan, Central Range, heritage, indigenous, oral ethnography

INTRODUCTION

The Bunun are one of Taiwan's indigenous Austronesian-speaking cultures and they have a long and rich history of living in the most remote mountain areas. The Bunun expanded their habitat from their homeland near the central region of Taiwan (Nantou) and occupied the Laipunuk (Nei Ben Lu) (內本鹿) area approximately 250–300 years ago (see Map 1 indicating the approximate location of Laipunuk).



Map 1: Approximate location of Laipunuk
(Steven Martin 2010).

The Bunun are divided into five major ethnic groups, each with its own dialect, and the Laipunuk descendants speak *Isbukun* (also known as the Southern dialect of Bunun). The high-mountain indigenous villages of Laipunuk were among the very last to come under Japanese rule and

consequently it was the last area to be annexed into the Japanese Colony on Taiwan. When the Japanese took control over the remote and densely forested region of Laipunuk, they found nearly two thousand Bunun living there. Beginning in the mid 1920s and until 1941, the Japanese systematically relocated the Bunun to the Taitung plains along the Beinan River. As the Bunun lost their hold on Laipunuk, similarly, the Japanese lost their hold of Taiwan with their defeat in WWII. Subsequently, from 1945 the Republic of China (ROC) with its ruling party the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) replaced the Japanese as absolute rulers over the island and its peoples. With the advent of ROC rule, the Bunun were forbidden to return to Laipunuk and required to speak Chinese Mandarin and take Chinese names.

The imposition lasted for nearly four decades and caused irreparable social and cultural degradation until the island-wide democratic movements starting from the 1980s and gaining strength through the 1990s. At the turn of the century, a series of exploratory "return home tours" were led by a new generation of Bunun descendents to Laipunuk to relocate and reclaim lost village sites, including the childhood home of Langus Istanda, the informant for this research, who is one of the very last remaining individuals who had lived in the region. Expeditions continued annually to the house site and included surveying the location during the 2006 cross-Laipunuk tour and rebuilding of the house with local materials during the 2007 and 2008. However, on 8 August 2009, Typhoon Morakot caused severe landslides in the region and subsequent attempts to reach the site have failed. Since 1941 and until today, not a single person lives in Laipunuk.

The purpose of this research is to record and document the childhood years of one of the last remaining people who lived in Laipunuk. This research is a compilation of ethnographic narrative; it serves to reconstruct the ethos and worldview of Langus Istanda, who grew up in the village of Takivahlas in the heart of Laipunuk. Her story is a primary resource and last-chance opportunity to record an account of the cultural knowledge and history of Laipunuk. Due to the late arrival of Japanese colonial rule in Laipunuk, Langus Istanda is able to shed light on a time when Bunun culture was intact; from her we learn about indigenous family life, agriculture, trade relations, and cultural behaviors particular to the culture and to the region. This ethnography and recording of a Bunun elder's life experience is the documentation of mid-20th century cultural aspects for the endurance of Bunun heritage.

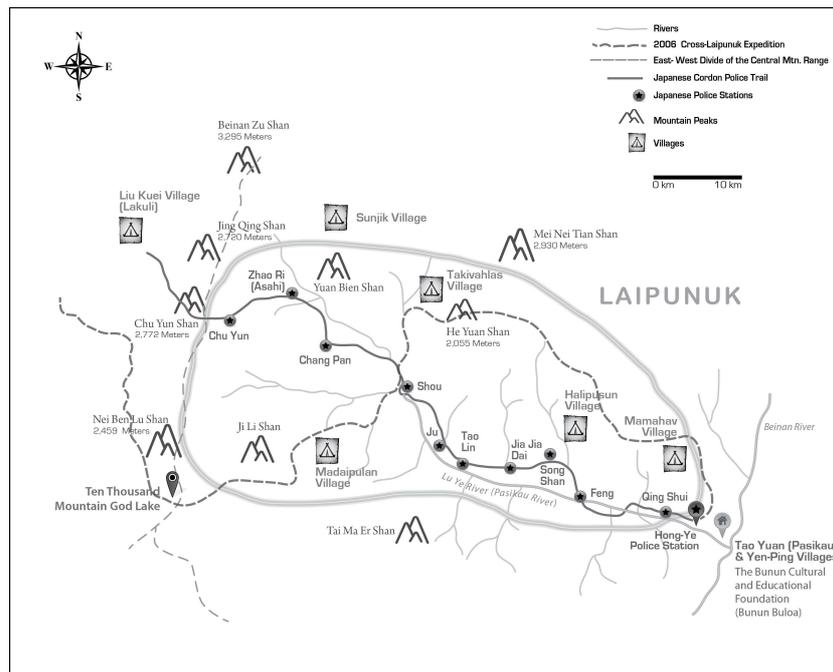
Currently, there is very little information available on Laipunuk for the following reasons: (1) the lack of literature from the Qing dynasty (1644 to 1912); (2) rugged location of Laipunuk and lateness of Japanese forces,

there was very little research or information produced by the Japanese and only a handful of photographs ever taken by them; (3) local insurrection events occurring from late 1930s resulted in a mass exodus of every living person from the region by 1942 and the burning of houses by the Japanese; (4) negligible documents were produced during initial ROC administration (mainly forestry records); (5) only a small number of articles and master theses have been compiled; and (6) there is at present no information available in English, save for Martin (2006).

LAIPUNUK TOPOGRAPHY

The island of Taiwan is nestled between the world's largest continent (Asia) and the world's largest ocean (the Pacific). With 200 mountain peaks over 3,000 meters, the island's rugged Central Range has provided a place of refuge from cultural incursion for the indigenous peoples throughout centuries. Laipunuk stands as the ultimate and defining paradigm of a remote high-mountain culture that faced irreversible change to a way of life and language. The region is located primarily within Yen Ping Township (延平鄉), Taitung County and covers approximately 15,084 hectares of natural forest; it is an alpine watershed, comprised of an arc of mountain peaks and ridges, the source of numerous small streams and rivers. These tributaries converge to form the Lu Ye River (originally called Pasikau River). The Lu Ye River flows down through Laipunuk's steep valleys onto the plains of the Beinan River just north of Taitung. The mountains surrounding the Laipunuk watershed are orientated along a north-south divide, forming the backbone of the south-central mountain ranges in this region: Beinan Mountain (3,295 meters), Jian Qing Mountain (2,720 meters), Chu Yun Mountain (2,772 meters), and Nei Ben Lu Mountain (2,458 meters). To the east of these mountain peaks flows the Laipunuk watershed draining eastward towards the Pacific; while to the west of the Laipunuk ridgeline, the waters flow toward the Taiwan Straits. Among natural resources of Laipunuk are diverse fauna and flora including the endangered Taiwan bear and ancient cypress trees.¹ Map 2 identifies the topography and toponyms corresponding to the current research.

¹ Taiwan yellow cypress, *banil* in Bunun, was especially valued by people of Laipunuk for a variety of uses.



Map 2: Topography of Laipunuk region
(Steven Martin 2010).

Prior to the opening of the Japanese police cordon trail,² which dissected Laipunuk from east to west, most of the external trade relations to the area came from the west, across the central mountain range. The Japanese cordon trail was carved into the precipitous valley walls and crossed through the heart of the Lu Ye River basin from the small village of Hong Ye (Hot Springs Village) in Yen Ping District to the trading village of Liu Kuei in Pingtung County. However, the Japanese trail was abandoned in 1942 after the forced removal of the people from the region following local attacks on Japanese stations known as the 'Laipunuk Incident' or 'Haisul Incident'.

METHODS

Langus Istanda was chosen for an oral ethnography for four reasons. Firstly, I had access to field data for her. Secondly, she is over eighty years old, and therefore lived in Laipunuk before the arrival of the Japanese and was able to recollect the culture of that period as well as the socio-political periods that followed. Thirdly, her family initiated a cultural revival movement including the *Bunun Cultural and Educational Foundation*, which was able

² The establishment of the Laipunuk police cordon was agreed upon at the South Tribe's Peoples Meeting in the fifth and sixth years of Emperor Taishou of Japan, 1916–1917 (Mao 2003: 321).

to provide four key components to this study: access to essential materials for Laipunuk history; location for interviewing; participation in expeditions to the Laipunuk region; and translation assistance. Fourthly, she is highly respected in the Bunun community and has acquired important collective knowledge from other Laipunuk-born individuals. Langus Istanda's eldest son, Pastor Bai Guang Sheng (Biung Husungan Istanda), established the Bunun Cultural and Educational Foundation. Nabu Istanda, Langus Istanda's youngest son, supplied additional video and sound recording equipment, and helped with translations, as he is proficient in Bunun, Manadrin, Japanese and English. He learnt Bunun primarily from his mother and his uncle, Tama Biung Istanda. Nabu Istanda shares their dialect of Isbukun and has participated in twenty expeditions to Laipunuk since 2000 to conduct mapping projects. According to elders at the Bunun Cultural and Educational Foundation, Langus Istanda has a deep and unique knowledge of Laipunuk due to her age, keen memory, events of her childhood, and her relationship with her father.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PRESENTATION

The procedure of data collection and recording which formed the heart of the study were centered on the narratives of Langus Istanda and were recorded over a three-year period from 2004 to 2006. Narratives were recorded using digital video and audio recording equipment. Data was translated into English by working with elders, their families, and bilingual individuals familiar with the Isbukun dialect of Bunun once spoken in Laipunuk. In some cases, informants also spoke in Japanese or Chinese (or mixed); in such cases the translation process followed the same methodology. All questions presented to the informants were generated by the author and written in English. All questions were presented by Nabu Istanda (interviewer) to Langus Istanda (informant) in the Isbukun dialect. Questions regularly initiated short exchanges of dialogue between the interviewer and the informant. Information was recorded and translated, and unclear findings were presented to informants for clarification. Translation was conducted solely by the interviewer and author by viewing and reviewing videotapes. All transcription was done by author.

Two methods of translation were employed: word-by-word and short summaries of dialogue. The former averaged two hours per minute of videotape; the latter averaged two hours per ten minutes of videotape to translate. Consideration was taken in selecting the appropriate English words and explanations to maintain accuracy. Bunun vocabulary was

incorporated into this document wherever the interviewer and author agreed it was relevant. As Bunun language varies significantly from English, and to preserve authenticity of the narrative material presented, the English sentence structure in these narratives may not always follow correct English grammar. Bunun text is presented in italics. Place names are indicated on Map 2.

As many Bunun cultural behaviors are gender specific, some questions were also gender specific, such as those related to childbirth and cooking. However, although some categories of data were intended, the data naturally generated new categories as the informant moved to share the experiences and stories important that were important to her. In the early stages of data collection, it became apparent that the informant was highly knowledgeable with respect to particular topics. The nature of expression and the content revealed by the informant generated the final categories chosen for presentation of this study.³ Where considered appropriate, Bunun Romanised script has been provided in order to preserve the language's atypical nuances and epistemology (and are footnoted the first time only). Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework of the collection of ethnographic narratives.

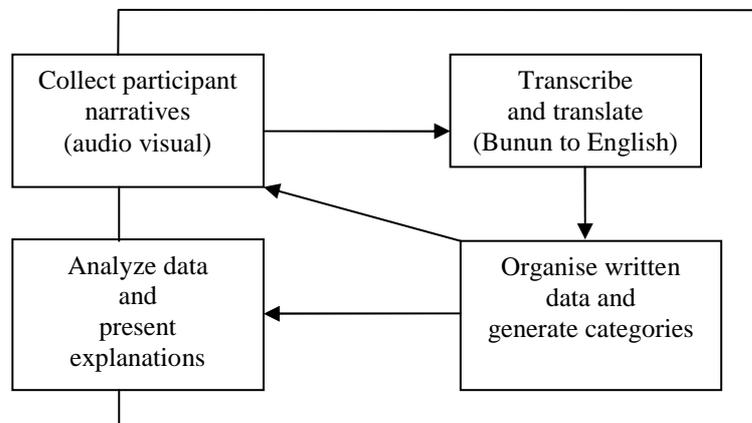


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for narrative collection (Steven Martin 2006).

Figure 2 illustrates a typical interview setup, including Langus Istanda (informant), her son Nabu Istanda (interviewer), camera assistants, and the video recording equipment.

³ Zeitoun et al. (2003) provided a basis for the generation and presentation of English categories.



Figure 2: Interview setup with informant Langus Istanda (center); son and interviewer, Nabu Istanda (right); and camera assistants (left) (Steven Martin 2004).

The research employed four stages transcription and translation. Firstly, the Bunun language was transcribed into a Romanised script adopted from the local missionary *Bible system*.⁴ Secondly, the translation into English was placed under the Bunun words to insure content accuracy. Thirdly, when vocabulary was unclear, it was presented to the informants for clarification (and is referenced as footnotes). Fourthly, an English text translation was generated.

⁴ There are currently two systems for Romanised script of the Bunun language. One is the *Bible system* developed by Christian missionaries and the other is a much newer government system (made official on 15 December 2005). Romanisation systems for indigenous languages were banned in 1951 by the ROC under the National Language Policy (*guo-yu zheng-ce*). The *Bible system* is appropriate for this study for three reasons: the interviewer and informant are familiar with the *Bible system*; they are unfamiliar with the new government system; and to respect the use of script of translator and informant.

THE MEMORIES OF LANGUS ISTANDA

Introduction of Langus Istanda

Age at time of interviews (2004–2006): 84–86

Chinese name: Hu Chun Lan 胡春蘭

Japanese name: Nishimura Yiko

Bunun name: Langus Husungan Istanda

Family tree: Takisusugan (father's side);

Istanda (mother's side)

Brother: Tama Biung Istanda

Son and translator: Nabu Husungan Istanda

Birthplace: Sunjik Village (north of Takivahlas)

Laipunuk village: Takivahlas

Current Residence: Yen Ping Village, Taitung County



Langus Istanda
(Photo by Steven
Martin 2004).

Self-Introduction

During the Bunun time, living in the village as a young girl was easy and simple. Then all the laws and rules came from Japanese. Whether they were good or bad I didn't know. In my childhood, first my parents guided me, and then the Japanese guided me. I felt confused and frustrated about whom to obey, my parents or the Japanese? It seemed complicated to me. At that age, I just obeyed the wishes of my parents. I remember my parents were always waiting for Japanese decisions regarding our fate. The Japanese came to our village and took me to a Japanese school in another village in Laipunuk. I stayed there for nine years. In 1940, they moved us down to the lowland a few miles from present-day Yen-ping village to a place called *Tubabalu*. That was sixty-five years ago. I fell in love and married a man from the Paiwan tribe. We met in *Pasikau*. At first, our families didn't want us to marry outside of our lineage.

Why We Moved to Takivahlas

The Bunun used to be divided by the mountains, but the hunters would meet when they went hunting and they would communicate. They had information exchange. Everyone was sharing information. We knew about the Japanese before we came; everyone decided to leave and come to *Takivahlas*. We all came together.

My Age

Actually, I don't know exactly when I was born because we lived in the high forest and I didn't count the *hamisan*.⁵ How can we know their age, it's not like now, when a baby is born, bathed, and well cared for. Before, the naked baby was just covered with a *kuling taigaz*.⁶ We even used not to have *liv*⁷ so we just used animal skin.

Our Babies

Our parents knew our ages because they counted the times they held the *kabalivan*.⁸ Once the *intuhtuhan*⁹ is done, the *kabalivananin*¹⁰ time comes, and then we will know if the children are, for example, ten or seven already, because their *intuhtuhan* has passed. Maybe once a month or maybe five times a month because *intuhtuhan* follows the *kamatuh*¹¹ and *andadaz*,¹² so it was at that time we remember the age of our children. Directly after the birth, we applied *ngan*¹³ plant to the head (an action called *puangan*). At the moment of birth they're named.

Our Baby Ceremonies

For every newborn, there are three rituals to do before we announce their name to our village and they can be counted as one year old. They should be done in the correct order: *puangan*, *kabalivan*, and *iswu-lumah*.¹⁴ First, we do *puangan* by applying *nang* on the head to keep away *makuang*.¹⁵ We make a necklace from the root of the plant. *Kabalivan* is a ceremony held at home and wine is prepared. The soft and soggy millet kernels left in the jar after brewing are put in the baby's mouth to introduce them to the taste. This

⁵ *Hamisan*: The Bunun New Year ceremony of the millet harvest festival. Bunun may use this word for the concept of year.

⁶ *Kuling taigaz*: Literally 'bag big', referring to the large Bunun waste bag worn by a strap around the neck or shoulders. Originally made from animal skin, but cloth may be preferred when available.

⁷ *Liv*: a word meaning fiber; can refer to cloth. More specifically it refers to ramie fiber or ramie cloth, the native plant used in cloth making.

⁸ *Kabalivan*: Ceremony to bless the newborn involving millet wine and gift giving.

⁹ *Intuhtuhan*: Annual name announcing ceremony (follows millet harvest calendar).

¹⁰ *Kabalivananin*: *Kabalivan* as a verb or action.

¹¹ *Kamatuh*: The tradition of Istanda family passing the harvested tops of millet flowers bunched together in their hands, from person to person in the field from right to left to person at the end of the row.

¹² *Andadaz*: A stage of the millet ceremony when it is left in the field to dry.

¹³ *Ngan*: Sweet flag root, *Acorus calamus* L. (Chiang Pu).

¹⁴ *Iswu-lumah*: Ritual of taking the baby to show respect to the mother's side of the family.

¹⁵ *Makuang*: Part of *hanitu* that represents evil, individual desire and female. Following the Christianisation of many Bunun, this word has become synonymous with the 'devil'. *Hanitu* will be further described in this research.

ceremony includes giving a boy a knife and a girl a necklace or a pot. Only after this ritual can the mother take the baby outside without worrying about natural disasters like bad weather or a typhoon that could make the baby sick. *Iswu-lumah* is our ritual of taking the baby to show respect to the mother's side of the family. The husband's side of the family should prepare a pig to give to the wife's side of the family (an action called *mankaun*). If the husband cannot afford to *mankaun*, they may wait until two or three children are born and then have one *mankaun* (called *ispan law du*). Only after these three rituals have been completed can we have *intuhtuhan* and announce the name of the baby. And at that moment the baby is one year old.

Our Names

As soon as the baby is born, the mother chews *ngan* and places it on the crown of the baby's head and prays to have a good life, to be powerful, and not to have bad luck forever: "Let the *hanitu*¹⁶ be afraid of you by the *ngan*." You should do this just as soon as possible. And after the baby comes out, wrap the baby in cloth and discuss what name will be used. We should choose the father and father's father name. Names always continue in our family. We do not choose the name by ourselves; they come from our lineage. Until now our names continue.

Respecting Our Affine

It is very important to respect the wife's family; we do this in two ways. One is *mankaun*, and we do it to thank her family because she was able to bear children. The other is *Isbaka-mavala*,¹⁷ which expresses recognition to the wife's family for her hard work and contribution to her husband's family. It is very important for the respect of the marriage and the two families' collective relationship.

¹⁶ *Hanitu* means the spirit of any living creature or natural object in this world, animate or inanimate, such as animals, plants, land or rocks, etc.; it is characterised by polarity, whereby spirits are either good or evil. Bunun often use the words *masial* (good) and *makuang* (bad) when describing *hanitu*.

¹⁷ *Mavala* means relationship. *Isbaka-mavala* is the act of giving the pig.

Our Millet Fields

Our millet fields were planted by scattering seeds, and a healthy field will be thick with young sprouts. To have the field grow up strong we have *minghulau*.¹⁸ During *minghulau*, several girls will be chosen by the clan to stay at a tree house, where their family will bring food to them. During this time there are three taboos: first is that they are not to touch a cooking pot with their hands, if their hands get black then the millet in the field will get black; the second is that they are not to wash their faces, if they rub their faces it would be like knocking down the milled seedlings; the third is that their dishes should be quickly washed by the other family members. Dirty dishes will mean that the millet field will have many weeds. During this time, Bunun hunters cannot bring home a bear to the house or millet field. The black color will bring bad luck. A hunter who is away cannot return home during this time, he may need to stay in the mountain until the *malahudaigian* (ear-shooting festival).

Our Childhood

We kids used to just play on the ground; our hair was always long and we always had runny noses. At night, our mother never let us take a bath. We would just eat and brush off, and sleep that way. Our beds were made from *hual* (a type of blanket) and of *kuling taigas* made from *liv*. The plants we should have to make for weaving are *liv*, *ngan*, *salath* (fiber for weaving), *mukun* (a root plant used in wine making), *maduh* (millet fiber) and *katchpulun* (corn fiber). I learnt all these things from my mother; she only spoke Bunun.

Our Childhood Games

Since three years old, my mother always took me to the place we got vegetables. And my mother knew what kinds you can eat and what kinds not to eat. She showed me how to plant sweet potatoes, and where the wild vegetables were. She showed me how she wrapped and carried me on her back. My sisters and I used to play that as kids; how to wrap and carry a baby. And the boys played *busulgaril* (bow and arrow) and *baugan* (spear), and they learnt how to use the dog for hunting with their father. They learnt to hunt at three, four, or five years old; by five or six he should start to carry *busul* (gun) for his father.

¹⁸ *Minghulau* is the time when the millet field is weeded or thinned out.

Our Childhood Snacks

When we were kids, our mother and father always taught us what things we could eat. They showed us about *tagnas*.¹⁹ There is an insect in the stem of *tagnas*, you could eat it. So when we were kids, we always looked for insects that you could catch and eat. There were the insects from the stem and another kind on the leaves. We used to find wild fruits, like *bakaun* (mulberry) and *halushingut*;²⁰ that was my favorite. These are the things we ate as small kids.

Our Wine

First, you must pound the millet, and then you wash it and cook it. When you cook it, you must control the fire so it doesn't burn, and then you can cook it down. Next, we put it in a big tub and mix it with *mukun* and cover it for three days. You must have *mukun* to make wine; it is like yeast. I remember, when our parents poured off the wine, that there was still millet in the bottom of the tub, it was sweet and delicious. And there were many taboos for wine. You cannot sneeze or fart when you are making it, and a woman cannot have her period or be pregnant; if so she cannot touch it or look at it. If someone farts, sneezes, or touches it in this way the wine will not be true wine. The family leader should get to drink the first bowl. Since we only use one bowl, one person drinks at a time.

Our Work and Trade

We are always busy weaving, such as to make *kuling taigaz* from *liv*. We pound the millet and take the husks off, just for each time, each meal, and cook what is needed, especially for wine, which takes a lot. *Mukun* is needed for wine; it is harder to pound that. After the millet is done cooking and cools, then we put it in a big wood tub with *mukun* and cover for three days (the *mukun* is also cooked). The iron pots from Taiwanese people, called *jiping*. Before we had iron, it was *jicu* (pottery made of clay). Our father got a *jiping* from *Lakuli* (a trading post to the west of Laipunuk controlled by the Japanese). When Aunt *Ibu* (Langus' oldest sister) was married, they took it to her new house. My father had a young deer antler that had blood inside²¹ and he took it to *Lakuli* to trade for the *jiping*. This kind of antler can have blood inside for several months.

¹⁹ *Tagnas*: A type of high-mountain indigenous reed (*Mischanthus floridulus*).

²⁰ *Halushingut*: A type of nut in a thick shell, which pops open when heated by fire.

²¹ Deer antler blood was valued as Chinese medicine.

Our Clothes

My father used *sakut*²² leather to be the baby's cloth. The goat leather was for two or three years olds. And normal deerskin was used for the older kids. You could make a nice dress for a girl or a nice vest for a boy from deerskin.

Our Japanese School

When the Japanese came to Shou (main Japanese police station in central Laipunuk), I learnt Japanese, but before that we had never seen the Japanese. I used to walk to Shou just to play. There were young men there—exercising, running, and jumping. We always followed the elder boys around and we stayed at the Japanese wives' house and learnt from them. This was before we went to school there. We just went in a small group to play. The first time we went to Shou was for trading; always my mother took us kids. So at that time we learnt about other tribes, such as *jivula*,²³ *bingbingan*²⁴ and Japanese. The *jivula* and *bingbingan* were servants and road workers. I was a little afraid to go to Shou. There was a store there, a doctor, policemen,²⁵ and there was a jail there too. I was eight or nine when I started school in Shou. Because I was lazy and walked slowly, I only went three days a week. I stayed home whenever it was rainy. At the Japanese school, we just learnt simple words like 'dog' or 'ear', and we only learnt simple *katakana* writing. I was twelve or thirteen when I finished Japanese school at Shou. Then I just stayed home at *Takivahlas*.

The Japanese in Laipunuk

At school, the teacher and police were so serious. And they had everything, like magic. How can we go against them? Even the chief said we should follow. In earlier times, the Japanese used to kill Bunun for no reason, but only at that early time. Once the chief obeyed, then the people would obey. The chief said because the Japanese *Masiapuk*²⁶ us so we should not fight them. We knew the Japanese were going to make us move (to the lowlands),

²² *Sakut*: The Bunun's name for the 'barking deer' (*cervus unicolor swinhoii* or *Sclater*).

²³ *Jivula* normally refers to any of the 20 plus indigenous groups who inhabited the plains (i.e. not indigenous mountain groups). In Taiwan, the term *pingpu* is normally used for Sinicised indigenous groups of the plains.

²⁴ *Bingbingan*: A word used to refer to any strong enemy (i.e. a worthy opponent).

²⁵ The word actually used here was *Kiboza*, a Japanese police rank.

²⁶ *Masiapuk* means feed. However, Bunun often use this word to mean control. L. Istanda confirmed she means "control."

they had been softening our minds, promising to treat us good, telling us that life will be better in the lowland. The Japanese cheated us. We Bunun knew we could not resist them, we agreed only to avoid problems. They had meetings to say that they wanted to treat us good. They treated the village leader very well, so he would convince us to follow them. No one would be against the village leader; they were going to listen to him. During the *Haisul*²⁷ event, many people went to the mountains to find him. Everyone was worried; those still living in the mountains, and those already at the lowlands. They pushed us to move down. My father didn't want to go but the family was going. A *Madaipulan* man named *Uvak*²⁸ was the first to move down. After the *Haisul* event, everyone was moved out. Bunun from *Takivahlas* were moved down *Kamino*.²⁹

Our Saddest Hour

Japanese gave us land to plant (in the lowlands), but the living was difficult. We had to carry our water for plants and for daily use. My father, *Anu*, was so sad because my brother *Biung* left with the Japanese to go fight.³⁰ I was so sad too. The police office had *bingbingan* that worked for them as policemen; they came to tell us not to worry. *Anu* was so troubled. Originally, he had hidden *Biung*, his eldest son, from the Japanese. I remember him saying, "They robbed my eldest son." All the men who went to war were killed, only their ashes came back. Our family was waiting for *Biung's* ashes; we often felt worried. When he never came home, we thought "Why didn't his ashes come home either?" Then one day, the Japanese office called for the family to come, they said *Nishimura Yasu* (*Biung's* Japanese name) has returned. My father just grabbed him and asked, "Are you really *Biung*?"

Malaria in the Lowlands

At *Sadasa* (a lowland area in Taitung County administered by the Japanese), there were three small villages where everyone had been moved down to. We didn't want to go; we really didn't want to go. By the time that all the

²⁷ Haisul, a rebellious Laipunuk young man, led the 1941 Bunun resistance against the Japanese (referred to as the 'Haisul Incident' or the 'Laipunuk Incident').

²⁸ *Uvak* is a Rukai name which came to Laipunuk through marriage exchange. Madaipulan was likely a Rukai area prior to the coming of the Bunun.

²⁹ Kamino was lowland area near present-day Shang-ye which was administered by the Japanese and where many indigenous people died of malaria.

³⁰ Many indigenous peoples joined the Japanese military during WWII and are known in history as the "Takasago Volunteers."

people had come down they realised what has really happened. The elders had warned them.³¹ Then the malaria came and the people were shaking. We burned *hunungah*³² plant to make smoke to keep the mosquitoes away. People were trembling all day, many families. Japanese fed us their medicine (*umalung*).³³ It was very bitter. Because of that medicine, not many babies came (were born) in those years.

Talunas

At the age of fifteen, we moved to *Talunas* because there were three houses of *Husungan* family where everyone died, so the Japanese just closed the doors and burned the houses. At *Talunas* life was still not good. It was just hard work in the field. *Takishjanan* family accepted us in *Talunas*, we were thankful to them. That place was better than *Kamino*; it had not been all divided by the Japanese. The Bunun living in *Talunas* just let us find our own area to grow millet, similar to the traditional Bunun way. At that time we were happier. There was not so much disease. We just used *lapashbash* (witch's actions)³⁴ for our healing.

My Life

In my life there has been *masial* (good) and *makuang* (bad) [the two parts of *hanitu* world], so how can I know when to be happy and when to be sad? When our family members died, that was sad. In the summer when the typhoons came and we didn't have enough to eat, that was sad—it all belongs to the 'dream', to *dahinan*.³⁵ We just do our best on Earth. I can't say anything about Japanese, we just followed—there was no opinion to have. The Japanese just left slowly and the KMT³⁶ (ROC government) came; when the Japanese had left, then all the KMT came. The KMT *masiapuk*³⁷ us. When I look back, we had our own way, then the Japanese changed our lives, KMT time we just followed, each time was that time, each way we just have to follow. I wish the young men, the young people, can share and have the *malavan*³⁸ like the elders, but it's difficult, how can they make it

³¹ Bunun legends suggest that the lowland areas have bad water and infectious diseases.

³² The researcher was unable to identify botanical name of this plant.

³³ The researcher was unable to identify this medicine, but it is assumed to be quinine.

³⁴ *Lapasas* (v.) means 'shaman'.

³⁵ *Dahinan*: The Bunun word for sky, cosmos, or heaven. In the advent of Christianity, it has come to mean 'God'.

³⁶ KMT (Kuomintang) ruling party of ROC government in Taiwan, considered sole decision maker at the time.

³⁷ As aforementioned, *masiapuk* means 'feed', but the concept of 'control' is implied here.

³⁸ *Malavan*: Power, powerful.

back (to Laipunuk)? I have that wish, but it's so difficult. Actually, I think it's impossible. I told my son (Nabu Istanda) "If you go back (to Laipunuk), and that makes your heart happy, happy because you really want to go back there, maybe you will have success, it depends on your *malavan*."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The research sought to delineate and reconstruct the social fabric and perception of the Bunun worldview from the perspective of Langus Istanda, one of the very few remaining individuals who can recollect the time and place in question. One of the major characteristics of this research design is that it captures the meaning of how a Laipunuk elder describes, in her own words, her personal-life experiences, and the historic events that shaped her perspectives. The creation of ethnographic narrative of Bunun culture in the English language included defining cultural terms and their context and introducing the colloquial language into a Romanised script. The study conveys that Bunun language mirrors the culture and environment of yesteryear. For example, moon is month, the millet harvest ceremony represents the concept of 'year', babies mature and their aging recognised in accordance with the appropriate ceremonies, and the Bunun didn't necessarily keep track of their ages after childhood.³⁹

Bunun cultural behaviors of rituals and ceremonies are deeply related to millet agriculture. The answers received from the informant generated unexpected categories of narrative. For example, the answer to the question "Can you tell us what your age is?" generated a category on how babies were cared for and how names were given. The informant was able to provide extensive ethno-historical information during the videotape recording sessions, albeit extensive discussion was required between interviewer and author in the final stages of translation, as well as presentation of findings to the informant for clarification. From the informant, we gain insight to specific areas of Bunun vocabulary, including her memories and understanding of life cycle rituals, including childbirth, childrearing and naming. We gain childhood insights, such as that children learnt survival skills at a very young age, what insects were edible and where to find them. The informant also provided extensive knowledge of millet cultivation and associated agricultural rituals, including those regarding wine making. The informant's childhood memories are generally positive, inasmuch as she tells stories of games, adventures, a safe and

³⁹ Very few Laipunuk-born Bunun elders interviewed during field research knew their precise age.

comfortable environment, and a sense of wonder for the modernity of the Japanese culture. However, the informant memories move to a negative tone regarding the forced relocations and the period of illness and death of friends and relatives she experienced. From the informant, we gain insight to the Japanese incursion and the forced removal of the Bunun from Laipunuk, marking the last hours of their traditional way of life.

The research indicates that the Bunun have endured constant pressure from external forces and, as a direct result, have undergone acute social, cultural, and linguistic degradation from the loss of their native homelands. Nevertheless, vast knowledge is still available from elderly informants born into a relatively pristine Bunun culture, such as the memories of Langus Istanda. This research contributes to knowledge resources by using oral narratives, giving a view to a previously closed window into Laipunuk. In this way, this study serves as a testament for Bunun conservation through interviews of seniors to enhance continued understanding of their ways of life and values for generations to come; it opens a path to the retrieval of ethnic identity. The research provided a sense of resolution desperately sought after by Bunun elders, their descendants, and the diverse peoples of Taiwan.

When these last remaining Bunun elders from Laipunuk pass away, we lose this primary resource and with them any opportunity to discover their rich knowledge of history, cultural tradition, and the details of events surrounding the Japanese incursion. This ethnography and recording a life account with an elder is the documentation of 20th century cultural aspects for enduring local heritage.

Researchers employ oral narrative recording as a study method, for the Bunun it comes naturally; it is their tradition and way of passing on their story and life experiences. In this way, the outcome of the oral ethnography of this study was mutually beneficial to both researcher and participant, offering extensive sources of information as well as a sense of reconciliation to the Bunun elders—its recommended that such work continues and expands.

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