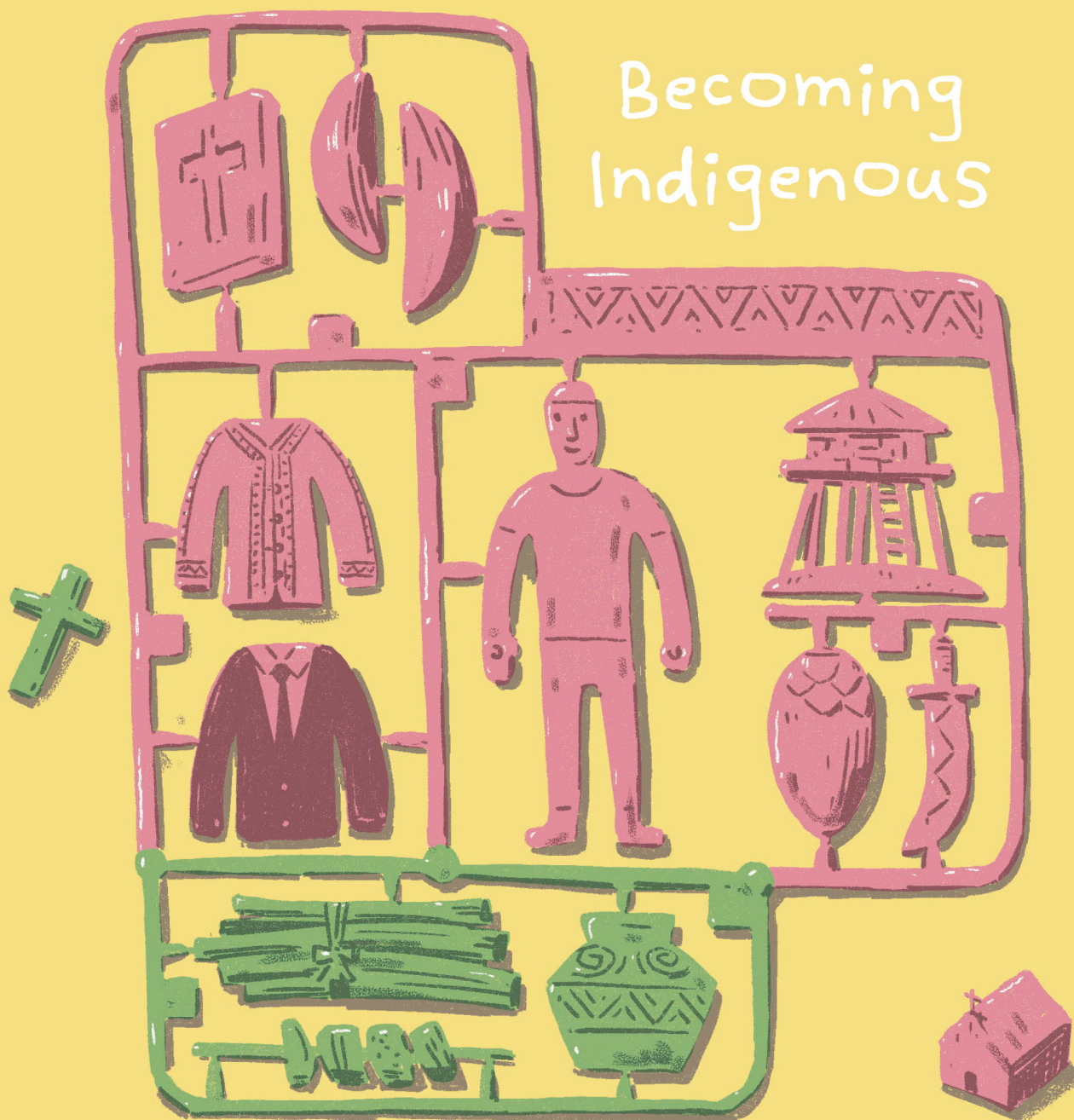


INDIGENOUS SIGHT



Becoming
Indigenous



ipipaktkat no pangaktoktowan o makakaday a iweywawalam no tao

Ritual Culture Unfolding Indigenous Knowledge System



o iweywawalam no yancomin am miamoamoon a tengen no tao, a pangozayan do kabadbedan a pimasoadan no tao, makma so makdeng a vakong no koka, a patozakan so iweywawalam no tao, a patoawan so kararalay no ineypa no kakoa. neymakdeng na am, o pipeypangayan no ya mapo do iweywawalam a aktokto no tao ya, na pacizagoman no maoran no karatayan, panaralayan, pimeymasoadan, madaday ori ya, kakepkepan no pangaktoktowan no tao no kakoa.

ya teyrako o na pipaktkatan no makakaday a vazay sicyakoa ya, na rana ikablis no pannaknakman no tao, a ya komalala so pipeypangayan no pamaremarengan so kanena a iweywawalam. ano makdeng a omnakenakem so iweywawalam no yacomin am, o panlanlagan rana ya am, ikepkep so nakem no makeykeylian, ori o ji tamo balinasi so iweywawalam.

ano macinanao do iweywawalam o ya mivahay do rako a ili a yancomin am. tomalilis sira a mangay do kakahasan aka do wawa, a omamizing so cireng no ineypa no kakoa, nakenakmen o nipakoyokod da do kataotao a ciriciring, ipakatengen do sazapan a vazay, ori o ipipaktkat no kazwayan do karawan.

ipatak o karo no tao a makacita so iweywawalam no yacomin am, da paciraing no yanbonkay do tizibi o makakaday a vazay no yancomin, ipakacita da sia no mitoktok do pongso a tao, so iweywawalam no yancomin. aka ji na zavatan no patwawen a vazay do tizabi ya, ala makawyowyat namen pa a mapatowaw so pamaremarengan so kanen a iweywawalam no mikazasizasing a tao.

Indigenous rituals, which are accumulated wisdom, and have dictated everyday-life norms as binding as laws, have established the sanctity of ritualised processes of behaviour and demonstrated indigenous peoples' deep reverence for ancestors. More importantly, the cultural repertoire of ritual practices reflects vividly and comprehensively the indigenous peoples' outlook on life including attitudes towards ecology, religion, and life knowledge, which are the core of the knowledge system of ancient civilisations.

However, in this modern, fast-paced society, the changes in social structure and value orientation have stigmatised religious rituals as superstitious manifestations. If people probe into the indigenous cultures, they will realize that the existence of rituals can, in effect, maintain community order and security, morals and norms, and community solidarity. As a result, rituals should be protected, not abolished, nor simplified.

If the indigenous peoples dwelling in cities want to learn about indigenous rituals in daily life, they need to go to a different place and experience some stimuli. For instance, they can go mountain climbing in suburbs, or swimming in coastal areas. By so doing, they can reflect upon themselves, their roots, and ancestors. Thus, they will be able to identify approaches and spaces appropriate to follow indigenous practices, so as to keep their identity and culture in mind. Amid the hustle and bustle of metropolises, they will eventually be proud of who they are.

To help the indigenous peoples get to know their culture regardless of where they are, the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation provides the latest information via news services, documentary programmes, and subsidised art. At the same time, the IPCF also makes the wisdom of indigenous communities known to the world outside, so that more people will learn about and recognise the beauty of indigenous cultures. As the major mass media broadcasting news about indigenous communities, we will continue to dig deep into indigenous humanities and revitalise our cultural heritage!

Panirsirngen do yanbonkay
Chairman of the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation

瑪拉歐斯
MaraoS

Pulalulau mathuaw antu pu'uka tmusuq a lalawa

Rituals are Age-old Commitments

mulalu munsai sa Thau, ya zain sa ishiq, mzai sa shinyung amathuaw maqitan dai. numa mia'awan sa kataunan a thau a ininthewan. mamzai shduu mun'utu sa mulalu masa apu'apu lhmiz, shduu mani pu'apaw ita munsai hudun numa Wazaqan masa prug a shuqrum.

Thau a Tungkariri Lus'an a mashaila ianan sa latata wa qali, mamzai thuini maqa antu tataal a inkahiwan, numa sa Thau mani makadahidhip masa antu luish a qali, maqa numanuma wa pulalu az'az multhkiz sa thau mat a pu'apu a tmusuq, numa lamathuaw pibahiwan sa thau masa piaqitan u'araan pinalhalhiza. numa tmusuq a itmaz naur miazithu kunathathuinan, antu dai a malhkakrikriw masa pangqa wa qali a tmara, lamathuaw pu'apawin tatata wa thau shmuqrum izai a shinyung.

Taiwaan a prug miarairain mzai sa apiaqitan puil sa yancumiin tiakahiwan a kazakazash, kanuniza puil mzai sa ya muhiahaw a lalawa ya kinalawa, maqa thuini a pulalulalu maqa az'az tu piaqitanin, nauriza inkahiwan amikuza kinalawa, maqa dai puntal sa inkahiwan a kinalawa, numa thuini a parhaway munsai a kazakazash antu mafazaq, izai akinata Taiwaan a Zinhuu mathuaw makarishkish masa mrunsuz, lhai sa thau ianan sa mathuaw maqitan a prug, numa ya miazithu shduu mathuaw mafazaq a min'ananak a kazakazsh.

mathuaw manasha sa thau inangqtu mulalu mia'awan sa tiakahiwan a kazakazsh, kanuniza inangqtu yaku mulalu mathuaw tmara, mun'utuiza sa shaba wa kawashiza, miaqay yancumiin lalau'un sa shpuut a thau, kanuniza mulalu a kazakazash antu pu'uka, kunathathuinan miaqawan isai a itan a ininthewan. numa tuali mingkalangan faat a thau Miniahala inai a thau a qbit sa kazakazash a kalawan naur ansuunin sa tuali dai mia'azu sa yancumiin malhinuna sa mingkalangan, lamathuaw mun'utu sa pashtirug a matash, amindahip a pashtay a thau kmalawa numa mafazaq a mulalu mashashu a ininthewan, maqa ya miazithu lhai sa yancumiin a kazakazash antu pu'ukan.

What rituals mean to indigenous peoples is something more than a series of actions taking place in a ceremony. They are beliefs, indicating the indigenous peoples' outlook on the world and life. Rituals can not only help form a connection between our people and ancestors, but also show our reverence for mountains, sea, and land.

The most important rite for Thao people is "Lus'an (celebrating New Year and commemorating ancestors)," which lasts for one month. It has never occurred to them to be absent or shorten the whole process even in this modern society where simplification is the key. To Thao people, following those rituals is the commitment they make with their ancestors, the key to family happiness and a good harvest. This commitment has been passed down from generation to generation irrespective of daily work and holidays, and thus, the participation in the rite shows their loyalty to and practice of beliefs.



Our society often stresses the importance of "preserving" indigenous traditional cultures, but usually people will only start to think about preserving traditions when the status-quo seems imminent. On the other hand, most rituals can be maintained according to the guidance of village leaders. What is missing in our communities is that young people now do not identify with our rituals and rites. All it takes is help and push from society as a whole. If we can be given a friendlier environment and more leeway, we will be able to understand our culture more deeply.

Many people believe that rituals embody traditional cultural values, but they are actually quite modern. After hundreds of years of suppression by foreign regimes, the rituals have stood the test of time, and still exist in our lives. The Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation as the major mass media for indigenous peoples should help the public understand and familiarise themselves with the uniqueness of rituals through image records, so that indigenous cultures can be sustained.

tuali mingkalangan faat a thau Miniahala inai a thau a qbit sa kazakazash a kalawan naur ansuunin sa tuali makarishkish wa Thau
CEO of the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation

Melaitan
何嘉丹

INDIGENOUS ^{Issue} 28

SIGHT

♥ Becoming Indigenous ♥

tuiisua tacini Cau Vuvurung



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a iweywawalam no tao**
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Published by: Indigenous People Cultural Foundation
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Editing & Production: Business Today Publisher
Art Editors: Zheng Liang-Long, Liao Xin-Hua
Translators: Chen Deh-I, Lai Yu-Hsuan, Ker Nai-Yu, Lin Shih-Fen, Tao Hsin-Nien
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Tel: 02-2581-6196 ext. 336
Fax: 02-2531-6433
Cover Art: Lin Jia-Dong

Looking at the world from an indigenous perspective.
Online version: insight.ipcf.org.tw

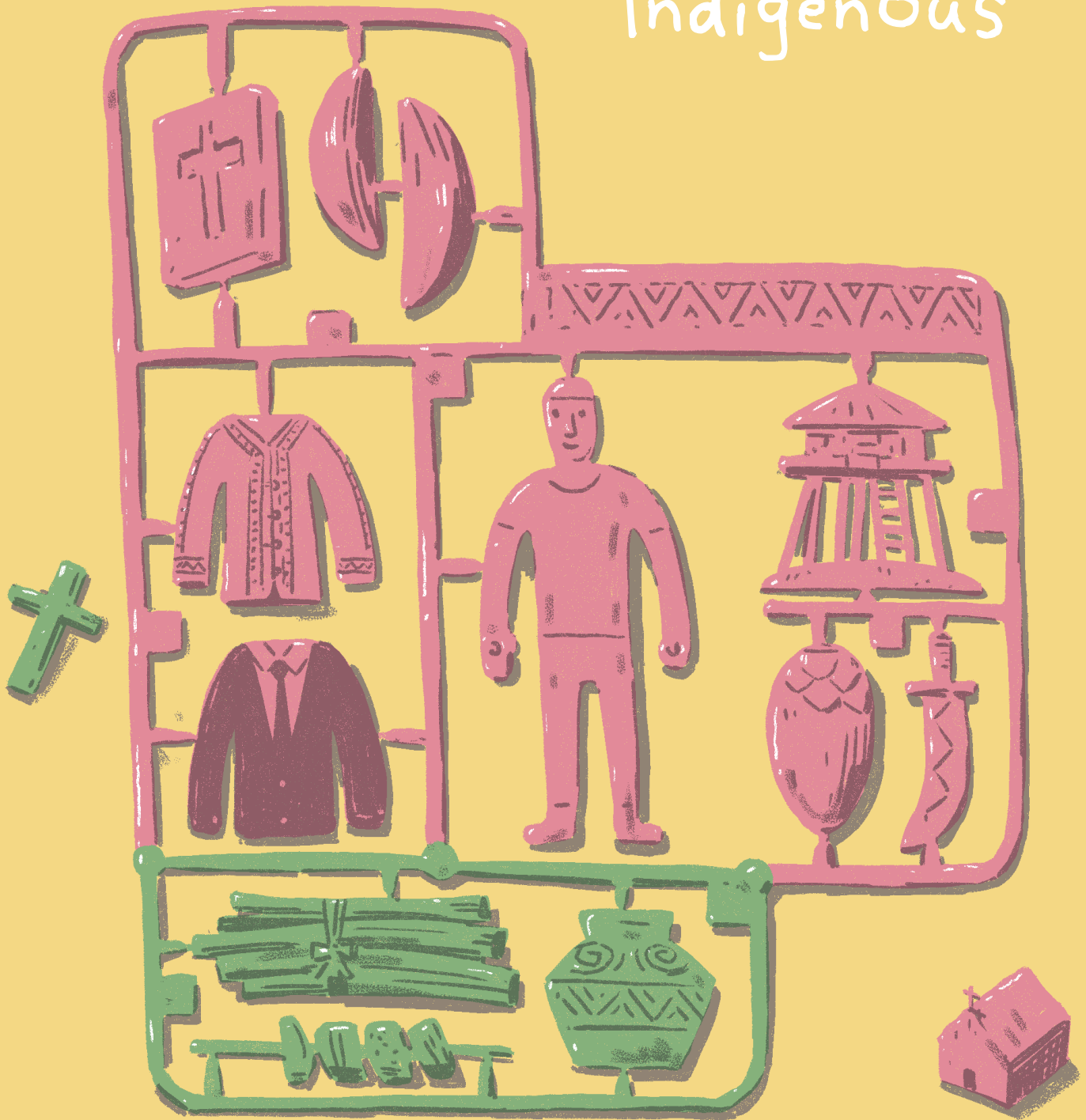


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Becoming Indigenous



tuiisua tacini cau Vuvurung

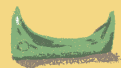
*How difficult is it to be a “real” indigenous person?
We need to have dark skin,
be very good at singing, be athletic;
sometimes we have to be humorous, optimistic,
and also a very good drinker!*

*But what if we don’t fit social expectations?
Does that mean I’m not a “real” indigenous person?*

*At every stage of an indigenous person’s life
we are tested by our culture and customs.
We are given a name when we are born,
this is the symbol we identify with,
how we know who we are.
When we come of age,
we need to pass strict trials,
to prove we can support a family
and safeguard our community.
When we enter marriage and start a family,
there are customs and taboos we need to follow.
By doing so,
we are not only keeping the family together and happy,
but also showing our children how it is done,
from one generation to the next.*

*Becoming a “real” indigenous person
was never about how the outsiders think.
It is the accumulated culture over the years
that form our self identity
and let us feel the responsibility and pride of
being an indigenous person.*

N.B.: tuiisua tacini Cau Vuvurung means “becoming an indigenous person” in Kananavu language.





Patronyms

given name + father's name

Given names are usually passed down from ancestors and adopted by posterity. People often choose the names of the great, the brave, or the virtuous. However, one's given name cannot be the same as one's parents or siblings.

A baby may be renamed if the family's fortune takes a downturn after naming, or if misfortune befalls someone of the same name.

Indigenous peoples that adopt this convention: Atayal, Saysiyat, Kavalan, Truku, Sediq



Matronyms

given name + mother's name

Men must avoid sharing names with one's father, uncle, or brothers and women must avoid sharing names with one's mother or sisters. The same convention of changing names to improve fortunes also applies.

In matrilineal societies, it is the eldest or youngest daughter that is entitled to inheritance. In some rare cases, a daughter will take her mother's name and the son will take the father's name due to the exclusion of men in a matrilineal society.

Indigenous peoples that adopt this convention: Pangcah, Sakizaya



Call Me by My Name

If you think "John Doe" can be a placeholder for any type of name, think again! Indigenous naming practices are not as straightforward. Surnames do not exist in indigenous society. In fact, indigenous names usually have a unique structure that can help people identify lineage and avoid intermarrying.

Written by Kuo Po-Jiun; Illustrated by Lin Jia-Dong



Call Me by My Grandparent's Name

given name + clan name

The whole family tree can be mapped with this kind of naming practice! For Bunun people in particular, the eldest grandson takes the name of the grandfather, the second-ranking grandson takes the name of the great-grandfather, the third-ranking grandson takes the name of the grand uncle, and so on. This kind of naming practice reveals a lot about the family genealogy.

For the Tsou, Thao, Hla'alua, and Kanakanavu peoples, boys take the name of their grandfathers and girls take the name of their grandmothers. The Kanakanavu peoples have a special genealogical name catalog and they rarely have the same name as others. This makes it easy to tell whether a person is of Kanakanavu heritage just by their name!

Indigenous peoples that adopt this convention: Bunun, Tsou, Thao, Hla'alua, Kanakanavu



Call Me By the Name of My Home

given name + house name

In Paiwan and Rukai societies, each house has a unique name that will change with such circumstances as the family status changing, relocations, or marrying into the wife's family. A given name is chosen based on a person's rank and gender. Families that attach greater importance to marrying a family of equal status and rank can thus determine whether a prospect is suitable just by looking at their name.

For Pinuyumayan people, the name of a person's former family house can still be used, even when that person marries and forms a new family. Pinuyumayan people are often named after their grandparents, or after certain events or objects.

Indigenous peoples that adopt this convention: Paiwan, Rukai, Pinuyumayan

3 different names
in a lifetime!

Paedonyms

Unlike any other indigenous peoples, the Tao people have a completely different system where the names of parents and grandparents change along with the birth of the firstborn. In Tao society, the naming practice for the firstborn is "Si + given name". When the firstborn arrives, the father's name will change to "Si aman + firstborn's name", the mother's to "Si nan + firstborn's name", and the grandparents' names will change to "Si apen + firstborn's name". And so, from the changes to a person's name over a lifetime in Tao society, you will be able to deduce the names of the entire family!



How We **Lost** Our Names

In the 2020 MLB Spring Training games, Kungkuan Giljegiljaw delivered the first RBI for the Cleveland Indians. This talk of the town among American baseball fans is Chu Li-Jen, who hails from Taiwan and has Paiwan heritage. The Cleveland Indians signed Chu Li-Jen in 2012 and this year, he is finally wearing a baseball jersey that bears his indigenous name.

In fact, indigenous people can be seen participating in many sports both at home and abroad. The Chinese names of these players roll right off the tongue of spectators, and yet they often know nothing about these players' real names. Why don't indigenous people use their own names? The reason for this can be traced back to Taiwan's history of foreign rule when indigenous peoples were forced to abandon their names for ease of management.



Qing Rule

Chinese Surnames for All

Many Taiwanese Plains Indigenous Peoples intermarried with non-indigenous peoples during the Kingdom of Tungning period through to the era of Qing dynasty rule in Taiwan. Non-indigenous people place great emphasis on bloodlines and lineage and a surname serves as an important indicator of that. Therefore, Chinese surnames were “bestowed” upon any willing indigenous people to indicate the “native’s” submission.

Due to mountain bans in effect at the time in Taiwan, non-indigenous people had scarce contact with indigenous peoples in mountain areas and thus, it was mostly Taiwanese Plains Indigenous Peoples who changed their names.

Japanese Rule

Switching to Japanese Names to Fight Alongside Japan

During Japan's colonization of Taiwan, the Japanese established a comprehensive household registration system. The Kominka Movement (Japanization) around the 1940s further aimed to fully assimilate the Taiwanese. In an effort to strengthen identification with Japan, a name change program was introduced to encourage Taiwanese to replace their Chinese names with Japanese ones.

In addition to Japan's aboriginal policies, the Japanese government also went into indigenous communities to recruit young people to join the Takasago Volunteers during World War II. The Japanese language training that indigenous people received and changing of indigenous names into Japanese names were all aimed at strengthening indigenous identification with Japan in both spirit and form and increasing indigenous morale to fight for Japan on the battlegrounds.



The Nationalist Government in Taiwan

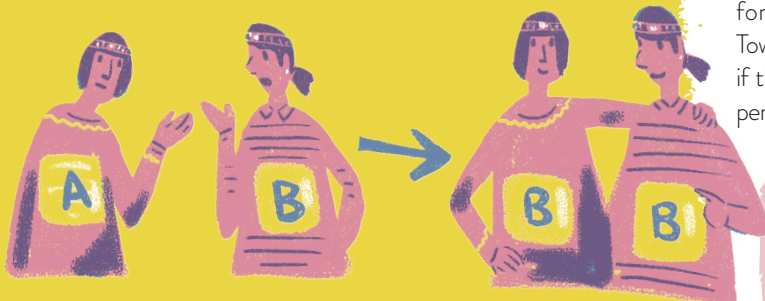
Non-indigenous Chinese Names Mandatory for All

After Japan's surrender and the Nationalist Government's takeover of Taiwan in 1945, the government announced an act on the restoration of former names for the people of Taiwan province in 1946. The act required Taiwanese to restore their former Chinese names within three months and Chinese names were forced upon those who did not have one. The household registration authority at the time handed out Chinese names to indigenous people at random using Chinese language dictionaries.

This callous assignment of names created chaos for indigenous peoples who have their own naming practices and led to members of the same clan having different Chinese surnames. Rank and familial relations could no longer be discerned by indigenous names after switching to Chinese names, which not only impacted indigenous identity but also had a detrimental effect on ethics of families.



Ch-Ch-Changes to My Name



Many indigenous peoples had differing surnames even among members of the immediate family and relatives, which led to ethical problems and family issues. So in 1972, the Taiwan Provincial Government established the Guidelines on Surname and Parent's Name Rectification for Mountain folks of Mountain Indigenous Townships in Taiwan Province. It was specified that if the following two conditions were met, then a person could change their Chinese surname.

1. A person who ought to share a surname with another family member but does not
2. The surname used is uncommon in non-indigenous society.

In the 1980s, indigenous issues were gradually brought to the fore with Taiwan's democratic progress. In 1984, the Taiwan Indigenous Rights Advocacy Group (now disbanded) called for the term "mountain folks" to be amended into "indigenous peoples" to eliminate bias and prejudice against indigenous peoples in society.



Since indigenous peoples' appeal for name rectification came to light in 1984, there have been countless protest movements organized by indigenous legislators, students, non-profits, and social movement organizations. In 1994, additional articles to the Constitution passed the third reading and the term "mountain folks" was officially rectified to "indigenous peoples". One year later, the Legislative Yuan passed amendments to the Name Act, allowing indigenous peoples to resume using their traditional names; however, their traditional names still had to be indicated in Chinese characters on ID cards.



To commemorate the rectification of the term used to refer to indigenous peoples on August 1st, 1994, the government designated August 1st as Indigenous Peoples Day in 2005 in an effort to highlight Taiwan's cultural diversity and ethnic equality.



In 2001, The Presidential Office promulgated the Status Act for Indigenous Peoples and in that same year, the government stipulated that traditional names could be registered alongside romanized spelling of the names. In 2003, the Legislative Yuan once again amended the Name Act to allow the registration of traditional names and Chinese names alongside romanized spelling of traditional names.



A Name Irretrievable

After centuries of change and decades of effort, indigenous peoples have finally been recognized by the nation and can claim ownership of their names. And yet, 25 years after giving the green light to register traditional names, actual registration numbers remain low. Just how difficult is it for indigenous peoples to reclaim their names?

Name Those Stats

Traditional names registered in Non-indigenous Chinese character format:	Traditional names registered alongside romanized spelling: (includes 2,120 registrations of traditional names in romanized spelling alongside Chinese names)	Traditional names registered upon birth:
4,314 人	26,574 人	925 人

31,813 people in total;
about 5.5% of the indigenous population

Source: Department of Household Registration Affairs,
Ministry of the Interior; latest update:
April 2020



A Distant Culture

Due to the rapid disappearance of tradition and culture, many young indigenous people are strangers to their true indigenous names and worry that they will use it wrong or pick the wrong name. Many are also already used to using Chinese names and the changing of a name is not without its effects on daily life. What's more, lack of awareness among employees at local government agencies also lead to breakdowns in communication and reduce indigenous people's willingness to register their traditional names. ❖



Lack of Consideration for Indigenous Naming Practices

Indigenous naming practices are not so straightforward as a surname plus a given name. Many indigenous names repeat themselves and some can be quite the mouthful. Even with the increase to 20 characters as the limit for name registrations, it is still not enough to contain certain indigenous names sometimes.



Is Chinese Transliteration Really Better?

In the beginning, the government required indigenous peoples to register their names by using Chinese transliteration. However, Chinese pronunciation does not accurately represent indigenous names and each indigenous peoples have different ways of romanizing names. All of this contributes toward lackluster efforts to register traditional names by indigenous peoples.

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Growing Up Means Responsibility

In the early indigenous society, armed conflicts sometimes occur between different ethnic groups and villages. In order to protect the village and assume responsibility for public affairs in the village, indigenous peoples developed an age class system where responsibilities and obligations in the village are distributed amongst the males according to age. Boys in the village join the age class at around 10 years of age. In this organization, they receive strict cultural education and physical training. The lower classes have to completely obey the instructions of higher classes, which is basically the model of modern military training.

In fact, the age class is about more than just learning and training, it is the key to successful rituals and ceremonies since the operation of such is led by the young adult class. Amongst all indigenous groups, the age class system of the Pangcah people, the Pinuyumayan people and the Sakizaya people are the most rigorous.

Written by Kuo Po-Jiun; Illustrated by Lin Jia-Dong

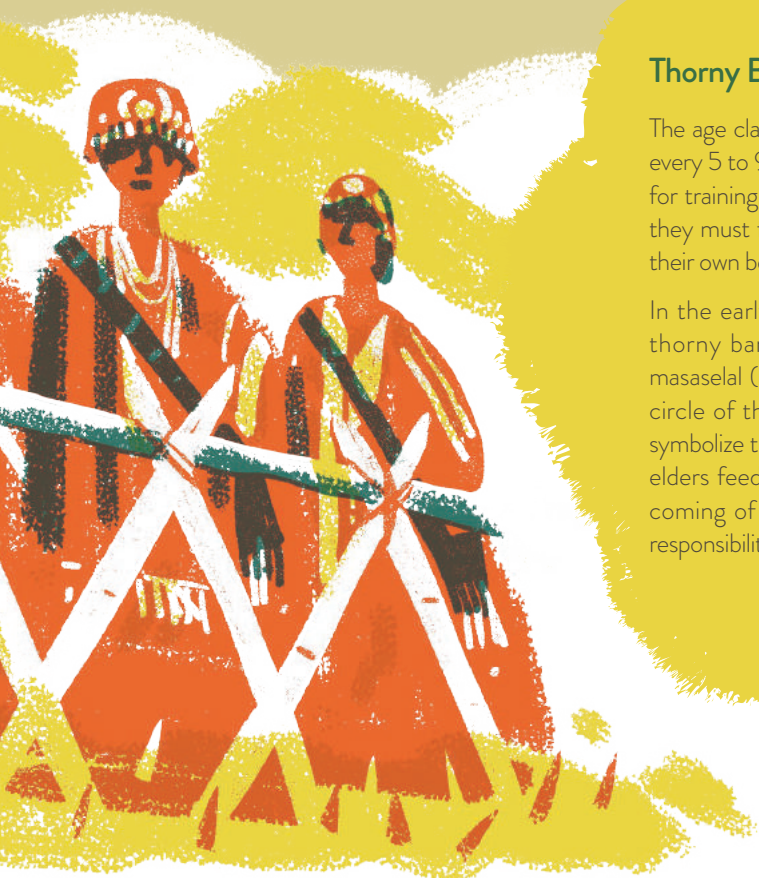


You shall be the Class Head !

In the Pangcah age class, they move up a class every 3 to 4 years, with young adult in the second class being the most laborious and in charge of all the labor works. Moving up to the third class, you become pillar of the village, responsible for educating the lower classes while being equipped with organizational skills to facilitate affairs in the village. Therefore, a class head needs to be chosen to lead them in the execution of tasks.

Each indigenous village select class heads in different ways, some are chosen by people within the same class, some are designated by the upper class. Take the Kiwit Village for example, they practice a unique method of “catching” in choosing the class head. Once you are selected as the class head, you are responsible for the inheritance of your village culture for life.





Thorny Bamboo Fences Guarding the Village

The age class of the Sakizaya people sees class promotion every 5 to 9 years, they enter taloan at the age of 15 to 23 for training, and to train their individual capability and will, they must first train in the mountains and learn to live on their own before joining the young adult class.

In the early days, Sakizaya villages are fenced up with thorny bamboo to safeguard the village. After each masaselal (ritual of coming of age), they will add another circle of thorny bamboo, the layers of thorny bamboo symbolize the military strength of the village. Furthermore, elders feed youth food at every masaselal to bless their coming of age and the fact they can begin to take on responsibilities in the village.



Train in Palakuwan to Become a Real Man !

There were no schools in the past, so takouvan for youngsters and palakuwan for youth is where the Pinuyumayan people receives education. Pinuyumayan boys enters takouvan at the age of 8 to 9, masaselal is at 13 years old and once they pass it, they move on into palakuwan to receive stricter trainings until they finally become a true Pinuyumayan warrior.

Takouvan and palakuwan are symbols of the Pinuyumayan age class system. During development stage, the male learns traditional cultural knowledge and receives training on archery, hunting and wilderness survival in takouvan and palakuwan, they care about physical skills and even more on character building.

“

Indigenous peoples live on hunting, and male capability is usually measured by hunting skills, whereas the female is in charge of housework, so they are measured by their skills of spinning and weaving. Most indigenous groups have ceremonies for coming of age in the forms of hunting, tooth removing or alcohol offering, to teach children what growing up means and the responsibilities they shall take on once they reach adulthood. Rukai people, Thao people and Tsou people all have age class systems, and you need to pass the trials to become a true indigenous person.

”



Hunting and Weaving are the Symbols of Adulthood

At the age of 15, Atayal male will hunt in the mountains while Atayal female need to learn how to weave. They need to pass tests to have their faces tattooed, which in turn is a declaration of their coming of age. The cultural value of facial tattoo lies in the fact that it is how ancestors recognize their own people, and is also closely connected to the good and bad fortunes in the village. This special cultural ceremony was banned and thus ended during the Japanese colonization. The Saysiyat people live close to the Atayal people, so some Saysiyat villages also practice the custom of facial tattooing when coming of age!



Starve and Freeze, but Firm I Stand !

Rukai boys enter sakovo for strict military training when they reach 15. For example, being topless on winter days to strengthen the physique, surviving in the wilderness to train the courage, and go without food for five days to cultivate the will. At the age of 18, village chief will bestow upon them headdress and upper garment as a symbol of a boy turning into a Rukai warrior.



**Drink the Alcohol
and Assume the
Responsibility**



Riding the Waves on Sun Moon Lake

Living right next to the Sun Moon Lake, Thao male receives continuous naval warfare training from the age 18 to 50, their coming of age ceremony also takes place during a battle on water. At every annual festival, the male would break into two groups, after the elders stroked their hands one by one and declared the names of their enemies, the two groups will each take one large boat and engage in a fierce battle on the Sun Moon Lake. The two sides will fight with all their might, and such spirit is the symbol of bravery for Thao people.



Kuba Brings Together Ethnic Spirits

Kuba is an important place for social operation in the Tsou society, and boys enter kuba at the age of 11 for education and combat training. At around 18, youngsters will gather in kuba to hear the lectures of elders and begin assuming the responsibility of safeguarding the village. Youngsters need to bend over a wooden boulder to be spanked by elders with rattan, an action symbolizing that the boy has the perseverance required. Finally, elders will put on a leather hat for them, and they will drink alcohol to complete the coming of age ceremony.



Tooth Removed is a Display of Beautiful Adulthood

"Missing tooth" was a sign of beauty in the past, which also works as a form of prayer for blessings. Regardless of gender, when they reach a certain age, a tooth need to be removed to symbolize their adulthood. Tsou people, Saysiyat people and Bunun people all practice the teeth removing culture, but how the tooth is removed and which to remove are all different. The habit of tooth removing no longer exists as times change and contemporary view of aesthetics evolved. ❖

As a symbol of leaving the childishness behind, alcohol offering is prepared for coming of age ceremonies. Following lectures from elders in the village, youngsters will drink the alcohol offered to show that they are willing to take on the responsibilities of a village, and that they have the courage and capability required to work for the village. In the Bunun culture, when a boy goes hunting with his father for the first time, his mother will need to brew some alcohol beforehand, and smear the alcohol over the boy's forehead as a sign of blessing. When they return home with their game, people in the village will also be invited to drink and celebrate together.

Class Head Catching in Kiwit Village

Written by Liang Wen-Jing; Photo credit: Varanuvan Mavaliw



The age class promotion ceremony takes place once every 3 years in Kiwit Village, youths that are about to be promoted from class 1 to class 2 put on a black skirt and eagle feather headdress, and circle the village to announce the news that they are about to be promoted. After 3 years of training, the boys are all strong in physique, their childish faces coupled with resolution in their eyes, eyes that sparkle with flame.

Elders who are 70 years of age, solemnly pass on their sla (class) name to the new blood in the village. The youths thus have a name for their class, buddies that are promoted together will be their siblings for life, for better or for worse. The name they inherited from the older generation will follow them for life until their hair is grey, when they will again pass on their sla name to the next generation.

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Fig 1: Class head catching is a culture unique to the Kiwit Village, in which kaka of the upper class will select a suitable safa as the class head. The work of a class head may be hard but young men in the village never try to run, instead, courageously assume the major responsibility of cultural inheritance.

Fig 2 to 3: The Pangcah people of Kiwit Village wearing eagle feather headdress, hunting knife on the back and bells tied to the thigh. Reporting news along the streets of the village in an orderly fashion, they are notifying neighboring villages of the upcoming ceremony.



An Age Class System with Distinct Responsibilities and Power

The Kiwit Village sits between the Coastal Mountain Range and Xsiuguluan River, its geographical location safe and discreet, which helps to maintain to date the entire culture of rituals and ceremonies, age class system, and the system of talo'an.

In the past, there are often hostile confrontations between indigenous villages, so the male is an important armed force to fight off the enemy. Boys in the village join the age class at 14 to 16 and live in talo'an with unmarried adult male to receive physical and knowledge training. The

system divides three years into a class, categorized as youth (class 1 to 4), young adult (class 5 to 9) and mature (class 10 to 15), 15 classes in 3 stages. Every stage and class have distinct responsibilities and power, much like military management, and each in charge of different tasks and missions. The younger male (safa) in lower classes must obey the orders of the older male (kaka) in upper classes, the upper classes will also respect the decisions made by the lower ruling class, thus forming a well-connected relationship between the classes.

"When the boys are of age, we catch them and put them in here, the little ones sometimes hide from us." Currently class 15 and the class leader of Lakowal (Pangcah language for turtledove), Chiang Kuo-Hsiung laughed and said that elders used to intimidate the kids, "life is going to be tough in the age class, the older ones are horrible and they will whip you good!" But for boys in Kiwit Village, they grew up awed by the older boys in age class, although a bit afraid, they look forward to one day joining the age class and grow into an independent man as well.

"Back in my days, boys in class 1 to 4 help out at home during the day and sleep in the talo'an at night. In addition to safeguarding the village, they keep each other company and have a good time." But more and more people have left for school or work, the boys no longer live together and only gather during holidays and important rituals.

Class 2 boys are in their prime fitness age of 17 to 19 and are the main muscle behind all village affairs, in charge of preparation for all rituals and labor. It is the toughest class. They are also preparing to move into class three, the leading class, and must accept the rigorous training provided by the upper class in leadership and wisdom.

Young adults in class 3 have a "class head" selected to lead the entire class in execution of their tasks. Members of class 3 will catch a class head from the class 2 members ready to be promoted to become the leader of the new class, and the class head is responsible for life until their old age, when they leave the age class.

Class 3 spends 24 hours a day with class 1 and 2 members, they are most familiar with the

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Fig 1: Third day of the Annual Ritual is when evaluation takes place. The older ones will carve meat and serve to the younger ones to show their appreciation of the effort put in.

Fig 2: Whenever a senior pick up a cigarette at the Annual Ritual, the younger ones must rush over to light it for the senior. The people do not use a lighter but take this opportunity to train the response and concentration of the young ones.

Fig 3: When parents see their child caught, they will try to stop the process because they do not want such responsibility for their child, a fight which also represents the humility of the family, as in they do not consider their child better capable than others.



capability and character of their lower classes, therefore, kaka in class 3 will secretly select the candidate for class head before the Harvest Ritual, along with their second and third choices to assist the future class head. After a candidate is chosen, they will notify class 4 of their choices, "if class 4 thinks otherwise but class 3 insists, they will respect the decision of class 3. It's because they are most familiar with the capabilities of these younger ones, the class head and assistants they choose are to play important roles in leader future village affairs, if their chosen ones don't do well later on, that means they didn't do a good enough job teaching your safa, and they must take responsibility as well," so explains Chiang Kuo-Hsiung.

Devoted to the Village with Full Support from the Family

The history of class head catching cannot be traced to its origin, but as far as Chiang Kuo-Hsiung could remember, the class head catching custom has never stopped. He still remembers the day he received notification that he was to become the class head. He was still in military service then and his uncle attended the Harvest Ritual on his behalf, his uncle was dancing when he was caught to be the class head, "my uncle was already a bit aged then and couldn't out run the younger ones, so he was caught and put on the headband signifying his position as class head."

He still recalls that rather mixed feeling when he received the phone call. On the one hand he was happy to be recognized as capable by his kaka, but on the other he was worried, "do I really have what it takes to lead my class?"



The class head has great responsibility, not only does he have to be strong in physique to lead as example in his class, he needs to have the wisdom and vision to lead. Chiang Kuo-Hsiung shared with us an example. A month before the Fishing Ritual, class 1 to 4 spend their nights chopping timber and collecting tuba, the survey of topology beforehand, estimation of the number of tuba, and distribution of work to be executed all rely on the instruction and deployment of class 4 head, “you need a clear mind to be class head, think thoroughly before making leadership judgments and plan B, otherwise if something goes wrong at the Fishing Ritual, you won’t hear the end of it from the elders!”

The higher you are promoted in class, the heavier the duty of class heads. You have to lead the entire class in the execution of tasks from upper classes and make sure you lead the lower classes properly. “On the third day of Harvest Ritual, there is a ceremony to show appreciation to lower classes, the class head must prepare pork and alcohol to thank the lower class.” Chiang Kuo-Hsiung shared that in the past people were not very well off, these food are all expensive resources and required help from the entire family, for example, a family elder would hunt boars in the mountain, and during the prohibition, they would secretly brew rice wine in the middle of the night, all to help the class head get the resources required ready.

Because class head has to work very hard and must tend to village affairs at all times, it is very hard to find a permanent job outside, and most of them end up staying in the village as temporary construction worker or laborer. So, whenever it is time to catch class head, some parents do not want their child to become the class head and will chase the upper class away or resist the catching.

“It really is hard work being a class head, it’s not just about you, the whole family will be involved,” explains Chiang Kuo-Hsiung.

Stick It Out However Difficult It is

Chiang Kuo-Hsiung has been a class head for 37 years and now promoted to class 15, the commanding class in the age class system. In another two years he will be promoted to the lowest kalas (elder) class and relieve himself of the class head burden he carried for almost 40 years. “Outsiders say that you have to be a class head for 42 years, but it’s actually 39 since we don’t have class heads in class 1 and 2,” he smiled.

Chiang Kuo-Hsiung is also secretly worried about cultural inheritance. In response to the civilization, development, employment, and economy of modern society, it is very difficult for indigenous villages to be enclosed like they used to, once the inheritance is interrupted, it will be very hard to recover the culture. Due to the dwindling birth rate in Kiwit Village, there are not enough manpower to help prepare for festivals, some proposed to stop holding the Fishing Festival and hoped that Chiang Kuo-Hsiung, the class 15 commander, could make that decision. Chiang Kuo-Hsiung sighed, “if I really were to make the decision to terminate it, I will be condemned forever.” He was dead set against it but also said, “we will be graduating in two years, you can make your own decision when you are promoted to this class.”

In recent three decades, the awareness of indigenous culture revitalization is rising, attracting many outsiders visiting Kiwit Village. Seeing other indigenous villages flocking in to observe them, see their frustration in the discontinued cultural inheritance and their desire for revitalization, Chiang Kuo-Hsiung is acutely aware of how precious the inheritance of ancestral culture is. The age class system is not just ancestral wisdom but the essential spirit bonding Kiwit Village, “as long as I’m still the class head, it is our duty to continue this system, we will do what we can with the manpower we have, but we will never stop,” Chiang Kuo-Hsiung spoke with absolute determination.

From joining the age class as a young boy until hair greying and finally relieved of the burden, in the decades of being a class head, they continue to be trained, exercised, promoted in the age class and learn, and becoming an independent Pangcah, the decline or rise of the village basically make up half of their lives. Thinking back, Chiang Kuo-Hsiung’s eyes are deep yet warm, “since we are born here, we must take on the responsibility, something we never had a doubt about.” ❖

A Katipul Warrior of Palakuwan

Written by Liang Wen-Jing; Photo credit: Uki Bauki, Hsu Ming-Cheng



*“Defend our ancestors, refuse tomb relocation!”
“The land is my mother, not your ATM!” These roars and protests come from the fierce Katipul warriors. Refused relocation of the 6th public cemetery in 2010, Jhihben wetland solar power development in 2018... During every major moment at the village, Katipul Youth Association is always the first stand on the front line, following the ancient precept of “collaboration in solidarity” of palakuwan and devoted to safeguarding their homeland.*

The youth association is made up of unmarried male in the village, they were all raised and trained in takouvan and palakuwan, they have the steadiness and a brave and resolute spirit. Whenever the village encounters problems, they stand like warriors in the past confederation age, forming a strong military fortress to defend and protect the village and their people.

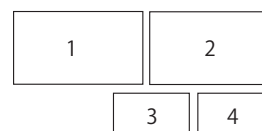


Fig 1 to 2: Palakuwan is the male's house for Pinuyumayan young men, also the heart where village culture is continued. Whether it is passing on knowledge, organizing rituals and ceremonies, or training the physique and courage, everything takes place at the palakuwan.

Fig 3: Village boys enter takouvan at the age of 8 and learn from a young age to work hard for the land they inhabit. During the mangayangayaw, takouvan ties yellow cloth over the head and receives rigorous wilderness survival training.

Fig 4: Boys must receive strict physical training as teenage to become a true warrior and safeguard the village.



Modern Palakuwan Warriors in Charge of All Affairs in the Village

One weekend afternoon in May, cheerful indigenous rap music is heard from an uncultivated patch of grassland outside Eastern Marine Biology Research Center of Fisheries Research Institute, a group of burly guys with dark skin were humming and chatting away while cutting sogon grass. They skillfully bundled up the cut sogon grass and stacked on the side, repeatedly.

“We need to repave the takouvan and palakuwan with a new layer of sogon grass each year, and major renovation is required once every three years.” Lin Yu-Chang, president of Katipul Youth Association explains that this is the annual routine work of the youth association,

they call on the youth and village people sometime around mid-May, charter a truck to Manzhou Township in Pingtung County to work for six days, cutting a large amount of sogon grass and bring them back, “each roof needs roughly 1,000 bundles, now we only have around 200 bundles.”

Even though they no longer need to fight for resources to survive, the palakuwan warriors are still rather busy on a daily basis, not only do they have to safeguard their village, everything from preparation for rituals, weddings and funerals, crop harvest, collecting sogon grass and even misbehaving and naughty children, depend on the assistance of youth association. Lin Yu-Chang laughed, “in addition to village warrior, we are also a lot like temp workers, doing everything in the village.”

Collective Revitalization of Village Culture by the Youth Started from a Song and Dance Performance

The traditional Pinuyumayan people is a matrilineal society, with the need to fend off enemies, they designed the age class and male house system targeting the male. The age class system is different in every village, but boys generally leave their original home at the age 9 and enter takouvan (for youth) to receive group education and live a group life; later they enter palakuwan (for young adult) to receive stricter training and take charge of fighting the battle with outside, labor, and execute rituals preparations, they only leave palakuwan to form their own family after they are married. If in the future they are widowed, they need to return to live in the palakuwan.

Just as other indigenous villages are adversely impacted by the modern society, the traditional culture and system at Katipul was once interrupted as well. The opportunity for recovery originated from a song and dance performance project in 1992. Indigenous Song and Dance Series – Pinuyumayan People organized by director Yu Kan-Ping was performed at National Theater, and the performance project lined up every Pinuyumayan villages in Taitung to perform their most unique song and dance for rituals. The young men from Katipul Village experienced the cultural context and essence of different Pinuyumayan villages and was extremely shocked, so they began thinking about recovering the culture of their own village.

Upon returning to the village, they began organizing the youth association, rebuild architectures including kaluma'an, takouvan and palakuwan, and actively engaged in revitalizing the traditional culture of the village and organized rituals. The age class system was recovered under the united will of the village.



Every Boy Looks Forward to Entering Palakuwan

“Boys in the village spend almost everyday after school and every holiday in takouvan and palakuwan.” Born in 1990, vice-president of Katipul Youth Association Ma Jing recalls the boys growing up, playing together and receiving training in takouvan and palakuwan, their memories are inseparable from these places, and bonded with their ale (same class buddies) more than with family.

To cope with the changing time, modern age class no longer requires boys to leave their original home and live in takouvan, instead, they stay with takouvan for three days and two nights before the mangayangayaw (Monkey Ritual), camp in the mountains, courage tested, and learn about plants and how to set up traps. On the day of the ritual, they will stab a grass monkey at the ceremony as a display of the boy's courage and insight.

But takouvan is not really the age class, boys have to wait until 14 years old, experience traditional rituals including pep talk, drink pepper water, smear charcoal over the face to officially enter palakuwan, and have the chance to become a Pinuyumayan man. Inside the palakuwan, where women and children are not allowed, they move up a class every three years, the lowest class is valisen, in addition to the daily labor and chores, they must follow instructions from the

upper classes, be spanked by bamboo board when they make mistakes or move up a class, starve when it's the Harvest Ritual, wrestle, and run marathon to show the spirit of a true man. All the seemingly assiduous trials never stopped Katipul boys from aspiring to enter palakuwan.

At the Harvest Ritual each year, palakuwan young adults would put on traditional clothes and a yellow headband, and parade the streets dancing the swift and fierce spirit dance (warrior dance), completely idolized by boys in the village. “When we were young, my friends and I would imitate the moves of the spirit dance, looking forward to entering palakuwan,” shared Lin Yu-Chang.

However, ale promoted together and enter palakuwan enjoys not only rewards together, they are punished together as well. “If you make a mistake, it means your ale didn't do a good job of supervising you.” Lin Yu-Chang said that there was once a young man who got drunk the night before tomb-sweeping and could not get up in time the next day. His family asked the youth association to take care of him, so he gathered everyone together and used bamboo board to spank the young man and a dozen of his ale. “Later on I thought, if he didn't do well, that means his upper class didn't teach him well, so they must be punished as well, we traced and spanked all the way up the classes until realizing that I am the president leading everyone, so I should be punished as well. So the vice-president and I ended up spanking each other,” he said laughingly.



The Unspoken Concerns of Inheritance

Although the age class system is revitalized, the cultural inheritance still faces many challenges, “for example, some of the ale that entered palakuwan with me left halfway,” says Lin Yu-Chang.

Some left to find work in another city, some stayed in the village but never entered palakuwan or participated in youth association again. Most people left because they are not used to the distinctly divided class system, or unwilling to be responsible for the miscellaneous village affairs and responsibilities. Coupled with the effect of dwindling birth rate, the number of young adults entering palakuwan falls each year.

Lin Yu-Chang admits that these are the unspoken concerns in the village, “young adults are the main force in the village with the youth association taking on the majority of public affairs, but the year-by-year decrease in the number of young adults makes it difficult to facilitate many things, and this requires the village to brainstorm together for a solution.”

“People in our village are unwilling to quit, therefore everyone who takes over the youth association and the mission of palakuwan each generation have the tenacity to not let things end with me.” Lin Yu-Chang believes that traditional systems must adjust as times change, but youth association, age class system and palakuwan will always be the essential spirit binding the village together.

The age class system stemmed from the need to fight battles, nowadays men no longer need to fight in the battlefield, but palakuwan still passes on the spirits of solidarity, obedience, courage and to respect the wise and venerate the worthy, and teach boys in the village to take their determination and identification, and become a modern day Katipul warrior to safeguard their own village and land. “I don't actually think of myself as doing something as mighty as cultural inheritance, I am simply leading the younger ones to do what we did before, just some everyday stuff that made me happy...I want the same experience to be passed on to the next generation so they can experience what I experienced,” Lin Yu-Chang shared freely about how he really felt.

The work of cutting sogon grass on uncultivated land is still ongoing, the 16-year-old Kao Chun-Hsien is a valisen, the lowest class in palakuwan, and he is quietly cutting grass along side the older ones. We asked him if the work was tough. “Of course it is, but I'm very happy to contribute to my village, it's worth it,” he said shyly. ♦



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Fig 1: Palakuwan requires regular maintenance, youth in the village will cut sogon grass together and learn firsthand how difficult it is to build the place, during the process, they understand the meaning of cultural education and learn to appreciate the resources around them.

Fig 2 to 4: Living a modern life filled with temptations, the boys are still willing to spend the whole weekend laboring away under the sun, cutting sogon grass then gather in bundles and carry to the truck, sweating away for their village.

Going After Your Heart: Please be Mine?

Being single is lonely, but simply dreaming for a partner and happiness and not doing anything about it is not going to change your situation. Back in the early days, indigenous societies had different customs for courtship and marriage, and some of these practices have been fully preserved to this day. Want to have an unforgettable romance? Follow the footsteps of our indigenous friends!

Written by Kuo Po-Jiun; Illustrated by Lin Jia-Dong



Catching Your Attention: Choose Me!

Unlike Non-indigenous people's marriages, which were traditionally arranged by parents or matchmakers, many indigenous communities allowed their youth to date freely. But how do you attract the attention of your sweetheart? If you have a strong body and outstanding hunting skills, or if you are an excellent weaver or singer, you already have a head start!

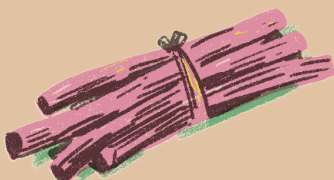
Professing My Love: is He/She Interested in Me?

I have been courting my beloved for a while yet I still don't know if she/he is interested in me. It's driving me mad! This is when a token of love can ease the mind of an anxious suitor.

Leaving Ijiva

affection firewood

Paiwan young men would go into the mountains late at night and chop wood that makes good coal, usually tropical crepe myrtle, linen hibiscus, or Taiwan acacia. Then they would place the wood at the doorstep of the girl's house to show their affection. Girls would also compete with each other to see who has the most Ijiva at her door.



Putting Betel Nuts into His alofo

lover's pocket

For Pangcah ladies who take the initiative, they would give the young man they fancy an alofo, or put betel nuts in the young man's alofo during annual festivals. If the young man is also interested, he will respond by eating the betel nuts. Keep in mind the way the alofo is worn carry different meanings: normally the strap would be on the right shoulder and the pouch would sit on the left hip (the opposite side would indicate the wearer is in mourning). If the wearer is already seeing someone, he would shorten the strap with a knot to indicate he is taken.



Perseverance Wins the Race - and the Girl

Even after the couple is finally together, they still have to overcome many challenges in order to start their own family.





We're Getting Married!

A wedding is not just the couple's affair, the entire village is here to help out! In traditional indigenous culture, marriage is a very important milestone in life. Different communities each have their unique set of beliefs and rules to follow to ensure a happy married life and pleasant new household. The bride and groom show their sincerity and devotion to their partner and this marriage through betrothal gifts (bunches of millet, rice cakes, betel nuts, large pots, the essential whole pig, and others) and rituals such as paying respect to the ancestors, carrying the sedan, carrying the bride on his back, the wedding and feasting. When there is a wedding in the house, the generous indigenous peoples are more than happy to invite the entire village to come celebrate and give the newlyweds blessings.

Once Upon a Time, There was the Fo'na Rite...

To encourage young couples to get married and start families, Alishan Township Office has been hosting the Fo'na Bean Festival since 2002. Interestingly, traditional Tsou weddings once had a "Fo'na Rite". Traditionally, the sexual prowess of a man was also an indicator of his abilities. In early Tsou weddings, they would let the bride lie down completely naked, and cover her body with fo'na bean flowers. The groom will then flick off the blossoms one by one with his penis. The entire process would be witnessed by family from both sides.

In a modern society where gender equality is valued, this type of custom which sexualizes the female body and ignores sexual autonomy has been abandoned. Moving forward from a male-dominated society, we need to reflect on the past and create a more gender-equal environment. ❖



Reference

Avaei · Vavayan shares traditional wedding cultures of the Tsou People. (2020, May 2) | Interviewed by: Chen Yi-Ru, Kuo Po-Jiun.

bridenapping

Even though young couples were allowed to date freely, most of the time parents still had the final say in marriage. Especially in patriarchal societies, "bridenapping" would occur occasionally when the marriage is dominated by the bride's parents or the parents do not agree to the marriage. However, grabbing the girl does not mean she is yours. The groom-to-be still has to go through many challenges and trials to eventually marry his beloved.



Working at the Potential Bride's House

Young couples also need to pass the future in-laws' evaluations to get married. For example, Tsou and Truku communities require the young man to work at the bride's house for a period of time before the actual wedding. In some societies, this is an alternative betrothal gift; in others, it is a test to see the potential groom's work capabilities. This trial period may vary from a few weeks to a couple of years.



The Six Stages of Rukai Romance

Written by **Tu Xin-Yi**; Photo credit: **Chang Ta-Chuan**

The traditions of a people include the thoughts, culture, systems, and ways of doing things that have been passed down from generation to generation and have intangible constraining power and impact on society. For indigenous peoples, tradition is like a piece of life-saving driftwood that connects them to their roots as they face the brutal assaults of foreign cultures. However, tradition itself is constantly oscillating between “remaining the same” and “changing with the times”.

“I can't speak for other communities, but here in Adiri Village, we have never forgotten our traditional wedding rites.” Community leader Lavuras Abaliwsu said proudly as he talked about the preservation and popularity of traditional weddings in the community.





Left: After the wedding, the Non-indigenous bride is officially considered as one of the Rukai community. Elders guide the bride, dressed in traditional garbs, through the wedding ceremony.

Above: Community members flock to the wedding venue of Community leader Lavuras Abaliwsu's son to give their blessings.

Let's Talk About Love-the Beginning of Romance

To ensure a happy and desired outcome, each community has very complicated and detailed rituals for different celebrations and purposes. For the Rukai, a wedding is a very important event. In fact, the Rukai have a set of customs that guide the young couple through the initial meeting, courtship, and eventual marriage in a courteous, steadfast, and meaningful manner. Lavuras Abaliwsu calls this process "the six stages of Rukai romance".

The first stage is the "gift of courtship". When a young man finds a girl he fancies, he will bring over plenty of fruit, millet cakes, and wild boar meat to the girl's house on the morning of the annual millet festival. The girl's parents will share the gifts with other community members at the square, and announce that their daughter is ready for courtship.

"After the announcement of courtship, the two will start to date." Lavuras Abaliwsu explained with a smile. In the past, Rukai couples expressed their love in a very unique way. "The young man would come to the girl's house with a group of friends and sit in the stone slab house. The girl, with her close friends, will sit next to the window. Both sides will trade songs back and forth until the break of dawn." The couple cannot talk to each other, and can only express their feelings through their songs. Moreover, the girl has to sit sideways and lower her head. She cannot look directly at the boy to show demureness. Lavuras Abaliwsu recalled the times when he watched his aunts' love song trading ceremonies as a boy. When his aunt tried to sneak a peek at her suitor, the elders and parents present will immediately pinch her thigh.

From Engagement to Wedding It's a Family and Community Affair

If the girl is interested, she will wear the garland from the suitor the next morning as a response. After confirming both sides are willing to enter a marriage, the families can move on to discussing betrothal gifts and start the engagement ceremony. Lavuras Abaliwsu added that a person may have many dates in their life, so before the wedding, they have to go to their ex-lover's home and apologize. This is known as "rejected love". Before Lavuras Abaliwsu got married, his family prepared a lot of gifts to bring to the princess that was promised to him since they



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Fig1: After the bride leaves her home, the groom's friends and family carries her in a sedan to the groom's house. Community members give their blessings along the way.

Fig 2: After becoming a Rukai bride, elders from the community leader's family will put lilies in the bride's headdress as a symbol of her purity.

Fig 3: On the same day of the wedding, the Rukai groom will also send several betrothal gifts to the bride's family to show his love and dedication to his bride.

were in their mothers' wombs. Likewise, if the bride eventually marries someone else, she also has to send gifts to her ex-boyfriend and tearfully bid him goodbye.

After the engagement comes the wedding. The whole procedure is so complicated it requires a month to complete. "The wedding actually includes five major rituals. First the groom has to bring the bride to the culture square and give her and her family the betrothal gifts; then comes the ceremony in the church, which is followed by the reception. After the feast there is a dancing party, and finally the bride is carefully escorted to the groom's house." Lavuras Abaliwsu explained.

Nowadays, most of the complex rituals are simplified. For example, the love song trading ceremony is gone. Lavuras Abaliwsu also mentioned that the very last stage of the whole wedding, the "consummation of the marriage", was abandoned many decades ago. "Only very few couples could complete that part. Since elders from both sides were present during this stage, there was basically zero privacy and it was simply impossible to complete this stage."

The Responsibility of a Community Leader's Family is Never Put Down

Changes in traditions do not necessarily mean getting rid of them, sometimes the traditions just require slight modifications so that it is more suitable for current times. Raised in a community leader's family, Lavuras Abaliwsu was expected to carry on the title and its responsibilities. He pointed out that a Rukai community leader does not lead a comfortable "royal life" as speculated by outsiders. "A community leader is not an emperor. He is not rich, nor does he have a harem of women. Our ancestors have taught our community leaders to be a leader and model for the village. We are only allowed to eat after the whole community is fed."

Bearing the title of community leader does not mean you are above the people, it simply indicates you carry much responsibility. There is no monetary allowance, no awards, only honor; and in the past, community leaders didn't even have the freedom to choose their own spouses. "Members of the community leader's family had to marry a spouse of equal social



status. So if there was a princess of similar age in another village, she would very likely be my bride.” When Lavuras Abaliwsu was a boy, community leaders still had to marry a bride of equal status. “I did not have the freedom to court other young ladies. I could only pine for them.”

For Lavuras Abaliwsu’s generation, marriages are ruled by blood and social class. However, since there are more inter-community marriages and changes in customs now, the rules are no longer strictly enforced and community leaders do not have to marry a spouse of the same social status anymore. “We don’t really care about bloodlines. What really matters is the sense of identity and dedication.” Lavuras Abaliwsu said solemnly when asked about the his family’s thoughts on the shift, “The most important thing is that the leaders can carry on the spirit and core values of our Lily Blossom Culture and show that they are capable of shouldering responsibility.”

Shouldering the Responsibility and Getting Married in a Traditional Wedding

A traditional indigenous wedding is very different to traditional Non-indigenous weddings. The weight of a full traditional wedding costume is so heavy that even local community members have problems wearing them. And since the wedding of a village community leader is extremely important, the couple has to follow many detailed rules and customs. But Lavuras Abaliwsu was pleasantly surprised by his daughter-in-law, for she not only saw to everything personally, but tried her best to make everything perfect.

Following traditions, the couple first completed the wedding in a church. After the daughter-in-law officially joined the Rukai community, the formal betrothal gift ceremony began. To show his devotion to the bride, the groom prepared a number of betrothal gifts according to traditional customs, such as firewood and chestnut wine (which symbolize affection), a large iron pot (symbolizing plentiful food and good life), a clay pot exclusively for the community leader, and bunches of millet to symbolize harvests. There was also the essential whole pigs/pork. A group composed of the groom’s family and friends carries the betrothal gifts to the bride’s house, and then carried the bride in a sedan back to the village.

Back at the village, the bride put on a lily headdress and danced and celebrated with the entire community in the square. This was followed by the swinging ceremony which is only seen in Rukai communities. The swing was built by community members with traditional methods. The bride, in all her splendor, stepped onto the vine foothold, and after her knees were secured, began to swing. In the end, her groom carried her down with a steady hand. This not only displayed their strong love, but also showed off the groom’s physical strength. During the reception after the wedding, the newlyweds went from table to table to thank the community members for their blessings.

Seeing that his daughter-in-law completed the entire wedding according to traditional Rukai wedding customs, Lavuras Abaliwsu admitted he was very impressed, yet still slightly worried. “It’s hard, they still have a lot ahead of them. The responsibility of a community leader’s family is a heavy burden.”

The Lily that Symbolizes Purity and Ethics Protects Village Beliefs and Values

Although some traditional customs have changed, there are still some elements the community insists on preserving. For example, the Rukai spirit of the lily is still visible in the Adiri Village community creed.

The lily is the flower of the Rukai people. Men are only allowed to wear lilies in their headpiece after they have hunted down six male boars with tusks and shared the meat with the community. The lily blossom symbolizes his courage and skills. As for women, they have to stay pure to win the right to wear lilies.

The community creed is not a set of legal regulations. It completely depends on the entire community’s faith and compliance to the culture to safeguard morals. But as modern society rapidly evolves, how can a small village avoid the strong tides of change and continue to preserve traditional virtues and culture?

“This is one of the issues that I, as a community leader, have to think about,” Lavuras Abaliwsu said calmly yet firmly, “we need to firmly protect our core values. I will safeguard the traditions of the lily culture and be the model and leader of our community.” Blooming wild lilies can be seen all over Adiri Village, just like the happy marriages and households of community members which shine with abundant love. ❖

Ancient Tsou Ceremony Revived at Modern Day Wedding

Written by **Chen Yi-Ru**; Photo credit: **Lin Ming-Yuan**





The groom brings betrothal gifts to the bride's house. Other customs include praying to the ancestors, eating tangyuan (glutinous rice balls), and tossing out a fan.

In May 2017, the Lalauya Village in Alishan was filled with joy and happiness. Today is the big day of Tsou groom Pasuya and Non-indigenous bride Lin Ming-Yuan, and they will be wed in a traditional Tsou wedding which is rarely seen nowadays. Following the ancient customs, they wore traditional costumes and prepared pork, wine and rice cakes to throw a feast for friends and family.

The Lalauya village has not seen a traditional wedding for decades. This is mainly because Tsou culture has been deeply influenced by external cultures, plus most of the people are churchgoers now, therefore most of them would choose to be married in western-style churches. A Catholic himself, Pasuya originally planned to get married in a church; however, since they had a traditional Minnan-style engagement ceremony, the bride's parents suggested that the couple could get married in a traditional Tsou wedding. Bride Lin Ming-Yuan was very excited. "I think it's wonderful that my parents came up with this idea!"

Winning Your Bride' Hearts with Voluntary Labor and Gifts

Having very limited knowledge on traditional Tsou wedding customs, the young couple sought guidance from Avaei · Vavayanan, leader of their hosa, Tefuye Village. The older man shared that in the past, their people would go and "kidnap a bride". Because back then marriages were mostly arranged. When the parents saw a suitable girl, they would send out the men in the family to kidnap her. If the girl is in love with another, this lover will join in the fight.

Yet kidnapping a bride does not directly lead to marriage. Before the wedding, the potential groom has to do voluntary labor at the bride-to-be's house during the day. Tasks included plowing the land or other labors so that the bride's father can access the capabilities and personality of his potential son-in-law. "Simply put, it's like an

evaluation before the wedding." Avaei · Vavayanan explained. The young man may need to work for two to three years, or even as long as ten years at his bride's house. His own grandfather worked at his future wife's house for seven years before actually getting married. But these customs gradually disappeared during the Japanese Colonization Period, and by Avaei · Vavayanan's generation, the customs of kidnapping the bride and voluntary labor were already gone.

A traditional Tsou marriage proposal requires the groom's family to visit the potential bride's home with pork and wine and other foods. "During the proposal, the meaner the bride's parents are, the more likely the proposal is going to be accepted. Sometimes they even mock-strike the groom's parents. When that happens, the groom's family cannot strike back, or the entire proposal would fail." Avaei · Vavayanan recalled that one of his relatives actually fought back, and, of course, the wedding did not happen.

On the day of the wedding, the groom's family has to prepare rice cakes, pork, and homemade wine as gifts to the bride's family.



The groom has to carry the bride on his back. This symbolizes the groom is strong enough to support a family.

There are no guidelines on how much food should be prepared, but it would be best if the groom can provide a whole pig. The bride's family will return half of it and share the gifts with other family and friends that have come to observe the ceremony and give blessings to the newlyweds.

The wedding staples all carry profound symbolic meanings. For example, usually rice cakes can be made with bananas, sweet potatoes, or cassava; but wedding rice cakes must be made with 100% glutinous rice. Because the sticky nature of the rice symbolizes "sticking the new couple together". Also, in the past, only surplus millet were used to make millet wine; thus presenting precious millet wine to the bride's family shows how important the bride is to the groom.

Blessings from Elders and Guests Make the Wedding More Complete

One of the most important rituals in a traditional Tsou wedding is the blessing of the elders. Newlyweds would invite elders of the family or village to salute the heaven, earth, and ancestors in their mother tongue, and then bless the couple. Pasuya and Lin invited Avaei • Vavayanan to complete this important rite which Pasuya considers the most meaningful part of the wedding. "We not only have the blessings of our families, but also the patriarch of Tefuye Village is here to give us blessings. He will inform the ancestors that there is a wedding in the family and invite them to join the ceremony and celebrations. If this was a church wedding, we will not have these procedures."

In the past, Tsou women were responsible for the farming chores. So during the wedding, the mother of the bride will prepare a small bunch of millet and a small hoe for the bride. After the blessing rite is completed, the parents will lead the bride outside to plant the grain, symbolizing future harvests and plenty of children for the couple. Then the bride will turn the soil with the small hoe to indicate she will be responsible for the laborious duty of producing food after the wedding. As for the groom, the family prepares a hunting knife, symbolizing the man is responsible for hunting in the mountains and safeguarding the community.

After all wedding rituals are completed, the feast begins. To celebrate this joyous day, the families of the couple will continuously offer food to everyone who comes to their houses to share the joy and happiness. The feast may last two to three days, sometimes

even a month. "The wedding ceremony itself is usually short, but the food keeps on coming." Avaei • Vavayanan added with a smile.

Setting a Detailed Example with Complete Rituals and Customs

This Tsou and Non-indigenous marriage was a special opportunity for both parties to participate and learn more about each other's wedding cultures. "The wedding customs of Tsou and Minnan are completely different! Minnan engagement ceremonies have customs such as "betrothal money" and "dowry money". Both sides have to prepare a lot of things and follow a lot of detailed instructions. Whenever I think about it, it gives me a headache." Pasuya smiled as he thought about the experience.

Lin Ming-Yuan's parents also thought that it is a wonderful opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of traditional Tsou weddings. When asked about how her family felt when they decided to have a traditional Tsou wedding, Lin Ming-Yuan laughed, "my family was pretty nervous when I told them I was going to marry a Tsou man and enter an indigenous household. But at the same time they were curious about what a Tsou wedding would look like."

In fact, not only non-indigenous people are curious, a lot of younger community members had never witnessed a traditional wedding either. Pasuya viewed his wedding as a presentation. "I want to people know



that we still have this wedding form so they have an additional choice when they wish to get married.”

A graduate from the Graduate Institute of Studies in Documentary & Film Archiving, Lin Ming-Yuan has long been making documents about different ethnic groups and issues related to indigenous peoples. She seized this opportunity and invited students from her alma mater to film and document the entire wedding procedure. “No one has gotten married in this type of traditional wedding for years. These images will later become significant research assets and material. I hope to let people see some ethnic symbols in my wedding and learn more about the traditional ceremonies of the Tsou people.”

Core Beliefs that Carry on the Essential Truth

Seeing that most young people today prefer simpler wedding ceremonies, Avaei · Vavayan pointed out that traditional Tsou weddings do not have a lot of restrictions or customs, nor are there a lot of taboo. The courtship period seems relatively long because the groom has to work at the bride's house prior to the actual wedding. “This shows the young couple that easy to get married, but it takes time to make a marriage work.”

Three years into her marriage, Lin Ming-Yuan thinks that long period which almost seems trivial is exactly what contributes to the Tsou people's notable sense of loyalty and devotion to their marriage. “Due to western influences, some people may take marriages very lightly. But traditional wedding customs, handed down from our ancestors, let the newlyweds understand that marriage is not easy and requires effort and time to make it work.”

Greatly affected by social changes, the traditions of the indigenous peoples are rapidly disappearing. “They are

disappearing so fast. The traditions are gone and assimilated by the modern world before we even have a chance to learn the ancient wisdom. This is why so many young people do not know about these traditions and culture.” Lin Ming-Yuan said that if her children wish to marry in the future, she will encourage them to have a traditional wedding as well. “Even if some of the rites eventually do disappear, we still need to let the children know why it changed.”

Although some traditional customs are already gone, Avaei · Vavayan is still optimistic. “Culture is supposed to change accordingly with the times and different mindsets. It would be impossible and impractical for us to remain exactly the same as our ancestors lived hundreds and thousands of years ago. As long as they still honor the core belief of our community rituals, young people are free to choose how they wish to get married.”

Now the wife to a Tsou husband, Lin Ming-Yuan is learning the Tsou language and community customs. “The indigenous people are the first inhabitants of this land and it is very meaningful that I get to learn from them. Every time when I walk in the mountains and forests with my husband and listen to him talk about the flora and fauna, I realize how much they know about the local environment. And this makes me feel more connected to this land I am living on.” A wedding is just a beginning. Through their eyes, we look forward to learning more about the wisdom and values of precious indigenous rituals. ❖

1	3
2	

Fig1-2: Community elders prepare stalks of millet and glutinous rice cakes to bless the newlyweds.

Fig3: Every step in the wedding has different meanings. By turning the soil, the bride shows that she is willing to toil for the family. The couple will work together to build a good life after the marriage.



The Footprints of Christianity in Taiwan



Walking into any indigenous village in Taiwan, we can always catch a glimpse of church buildings and bright red crosses. Can it be that all indigenous people in Taiwan are Christians? Rituals and ceremonies play an important role in indigenous religious culture, but under the influence of outsiders, Taiwan's indigenous people begin to follow practices of foreign religions, such as praying with incense sticks, reciting the Bible, and converting to the Christian faith. What on earth has contributed to the widespread popularity of Christianity among Taiwan's indigenous communities?

Written by Kuo Po-Jiun; Illustrated by Lin Jia-Dong

Completely Banned and Expelled

After Koxinga, the Chinese Ming loyalist who resisted the Qing conquest of China, defeated the Netherlands and took over Taiwan in 1661, an anti-Christian policy was strictly enforced by the regime. Missionaries were persecuted and churches destroyed, drawing the transmission of Western religions to a complete halt. The activities of Christianity seemed to have virtually disappeared since then.

First Arrival of Christianity Brought by Netherlands Colonizers

Christianity was first brought to Taiwan by the Netherlands colonizers in the 17th century, although their main purpose was trade and commerce. The Netherlands Reformed Church began their missionary work in Tainan. They introduced the Roman alphabet and employed it to compile the dictionary of the local indigenous language. They also produced a translation of Christian doctrine as a means to foster the link between the indigenous community and Christianity. At the same time, Catholic missionaries that came along with the Spaniards based in Northern Taiwan were also engaged in their missionary work but were not as influential as the Netherlands church.



Miracles of the 20th Century

After the end of World War II, Taiwan was freed from Japanese control, and Christianity continued to flourish on the island. Indigenous communities saw the arrival of foreign missionaries, the non-indigenous and indigenous Christians to spread the religion. Also, thanks to American aid, a large influx of indigenous converts was attracted by the church's provision of substantial supplies and medical resources. The 1950s and 1960s thus saw the dramatic increase of indigenous Christian popularity, which was praised as the "miracles of the 20th century."



The Supremacy of Japanese Spirit

After the First Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895. The Japanese government categorized religions in Taiwan into two types: One is the "old customs and beliefs" including Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism of the Non-indigenous Chinese immigrants; the other the Christianity from Europe. In the early days of Japanese rule, religious freedom was respected by the government, and no strict control was imposed over Taiwanese people's religious beliefs. In the 1930s, however, as the international situation became increasingly tense, the government began to implement the "Kominka Movement" (Japanization) as a means of thought remolding to reinforce control over the colonized and facilitate the mobilization of human and material resources. Likewise, the spirit of Japanese imperialism was promoted in terms of religion, which was embodied by the establishment of Japanese shrines. The traditional religious system and beliefs of Taiwan's indigenous peoples were wiped out, resulting in their loss of faith.



Influx of Western Religions with the Opening of Ports

In the 1860s, the Qing Empire signed the Treaty of Tianjin with Great Britain, opening the ports of Hobe (today's Tamsui) and Takao (today's Kaohsiung) to foreign trade. Since then, Taiwan has seen a large influx of Western religious activities that left a profound impact on the Taiwanese society.

The 19th century saw the global expansion of colonial powers, and Western religions were no exception. With the achievements of their home countries, Western missionaries often viewed colonies with a sense of cultural and religious superiority. Those who came to Taiwan tended to be prejudiced against the indigenous peoples and approached them with an attitude as if they had come to "civilize" them. These missionaries, while serving as preachers of the gospel, were imperialists at heart. They regarded indigenous people as "backward and barbaric" but ignored their violence toward the colonized. Such a condescending attitude of missionaries has had a far-reaching influence on Taiwan's indigenous society, depriving many local Christians of chances to express their voices in the church.



Faith Draws Us Closer Together

Three major branches of Christianity that have taken root in Taiwan: The Protestant, the Catholic, and the True Jesus Church. Each of them takes a different approach to indigenous peoples with varying degrees of closeness to local society. Over the past decades, the Christian faith has thrived and become an indispensable part of the lives of Taiwan's indigenous peoples, bringing profound influence and change to their communities.

1 In the early days when missionaries first arrived, the Roman alphabet was used to facilitate the translation of the Bible and transliteration of indigenous languages. Besides, they also taught local people to read and use the alphabet to build their own writing system, which is the most widely used among indigenous communities nowadays.

Since the arrival of the Netherlands in the 17th century, Taiwan's indigenous peoples have been colonized by several foreign regimes and subjected to various forms of control, oppression, and discrimination. But they are always the very group to be ignored and muted. This causes them to develop an inferiority complex of being indigenous and deepens their cultural alienation. Later, the introduction of Christianity enables community members to find spiritual consolation and support in the faith of God and a sense of belonging through religion. For those who work and study in cities, the church gradually becomes their spiritual pillar in the face of cultural shocks and financial worries.

3 The resources and manpower of indigenous communities have always been scarce. The promotion of Christianity in these regions is usually implemented by establishing churches, providing free educational services, and distributing plenty of relief supplies. Besides, the close ties between churches in the mountains and those in the lowlands ensure mutual assistance and help to bring communities and people closer to each other.

4 Attaching importance to human rights and dignity, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has long been dedicated to social care and seeks to speak up for the underprivileged. It played an active role in promoting transitional justice and name rectification for indigenous peoples in the 1980s by assisting with mobilization campaigns and the cultivation of ethnic consciousness. Today, the continuous progress of the Taiwan Indigenous Movement would not have been achieved without the appeal and leadership by the church.



Loss of Indigenous Culture to the Faith of God

Today, Taiwan boasts a high percentage of indigenous Christian populations whose living habits and cultural identity have been deeply affected by their faith. In its early days in Taiwan, however, the Christian church approached indigenous peoples with a sense of superiority generated by colonialism. This led to the church's misconceptions about indigenous cultures and society and attempts to destroy them, which resulted in the loss of traditions and a negative impact on indigenous people's self-identity.

Taiwan's indigenous peoples have their special views on spirituality and divinity, believing that there exists a mysterious link between humans, nature, and the deceased. Upon its arrival, however, the Christian church fails to develop a good understanding of the significance of various indigenous cultures. It considers such things as indigenous mythology, rituals and ceremonies as well as shamanism as superstitions and heretical customs that must be banned. Many indigenous cultural artifacts and rituals, along with traditional costumes, have thus disappeared or destroyed, causing a crisis to Taiwan's indigenous cultures.

The rapid growth of Christianity in indigenous communities has also led to the decline of traditional culture. The values of Christianity's monotheism conflict with those of indigenous beliefs in ancestral spirits. The traditional social structure of indigenous communities is gradually changed, with the role of community leaders being replaced by priests and the function of traditional family homes taken over by the church. Original indigenous beliefs are denied and lost one after another.

Praying with Incense Sticks Enriches Diversity of Religious Culture

Apart from a mass conversion of indigenous people to Christianity, those living in the lowlands are also subject to the influence of non-indigenous religious customs thanks to their geographical proximity and frequent intermarriage. Such practices as setting up an altar at home, praying with incense sticks, and worshipping ancestors thus become common scenes in their daily lives. Despite this, however, traditional indigenous beliefs are not necessarily about to disappear completely, because the integration and transformation of Taiwan's religious beliefs are way complicated and full of possibilities. In dealing with a foreign culture, indigenous people also try to incorporate their life experience and knowledge to create a new kind of culture unique to themselves.

Nowadays, with the rise of ethnic consciousness among indigenous communities, traditional religious cultures are showing signs of revitalization. Take annual rituals of various ethnic groups for example. Increased emphases are being placed by the government on such events, drawing the attention of media and attracting tourists to participate. The diversity of religious activities and cultural features, besides functioning to solidify indigenous people's ethnic identities, also presents a vivid picture of their lifestyles. ❖

The Protestant church, the Catholic church, and the True Jesus Church are the three major branches of Christianity in Taiwan's indigenous communities. Each of them can be subdivided into different denominations with varying doctrines. In the case where a village has more than one of these branches with followers from the same clan, the tension between community members must be high and conflicts are inevitable.

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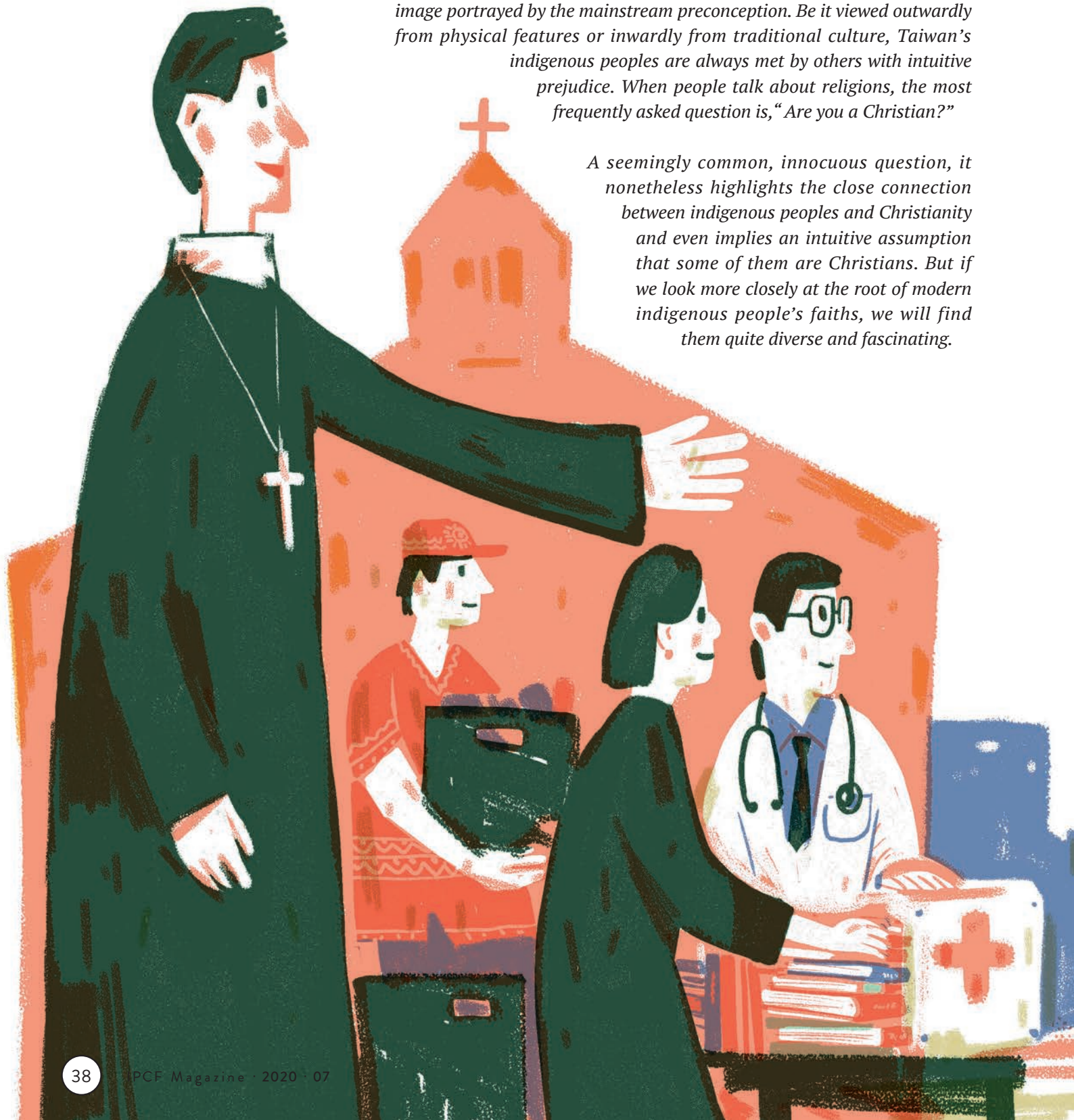
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Are We Really Free in God's Hands?

Written by Bali Nangavulan; Illustrated by Lin Jia-Dong

Today's indigenous peoples in Taiwan, when subjected to the scrutiny of society, are often troubled by their failure to conform to the superficial image portrayed by the mainstream preconception. Be it viewed outwardly from physical features or inwardly from traditional culture, Taiwan's indigenous peoples are always met by others with intuitive prejudice. When people talk about religions, the most frequently asked question is, "Are you a Christian?"

A seemingly common, innocuous question, it nonetheless highlights the close connection between indigenous peoples and Christianity and even implies an intuitive assumption that some of them are Christians. But if we look more closely at the root of modern indigenous people's faiths, we will find them quite diverse and fascinating.



Miracles of the 20th Century: Prevalence of Christianity in Taiwan's Indigenous Communities

In Taiwan, churches featuring a red cross on the roof can be seen everywhere in most indigenous communities. They are not only the religious center for local Christians but also a destination many government officials must not miss when visiting these villages. Local religious leaders, such as priests and ministers, are important figures with far-reaching and profound influence. This can be attributed to the prestige and authority built over an extended period since the arrival of Western powers that introduced Christianity to the island.

The spread of Christianity in Taiwan can be traced as far back as the late 19th century when the Netherlands and Spaniard missionaries went deep into the regions resided by Taiwanese Plains Indigenous Peoples on the west part of the island. During the Japanese colonial period, despite the official ban on the Western religion, missionary activities remained active. Records are maintained which documented the work of Canadian and Japanese missionaries preaching in indigenous communities in the Eastern and Mid-northern Taiwan, respectively. In the early Republican period, after the Chinese Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek, the then president, imposed strict restrictions over indigenous regions. The entry of outsiders into the mountainous areas was prohibited except for the Presbyterian Church, which was allowed preferential access simply because Chiang himself was a Christian. Thereafter, churches were established throughout Taiwan's indigenous regions, with a rising percentage of indigenous people converting to Christianity. So astonishing was the popularity of Christianity across the indigenous area that the phenomenon was dubbed as "miracles of the 20th century" by the Christianity community at that time.

After the martial law was lifted, the restrictions on indigenous regions were gradually loosened, and local churches began to interact closely with those in the lowlands. Those who work and study far away from their hometowns would join urban churches in their neighborhood. When indigenous community churches are to construct new buildings

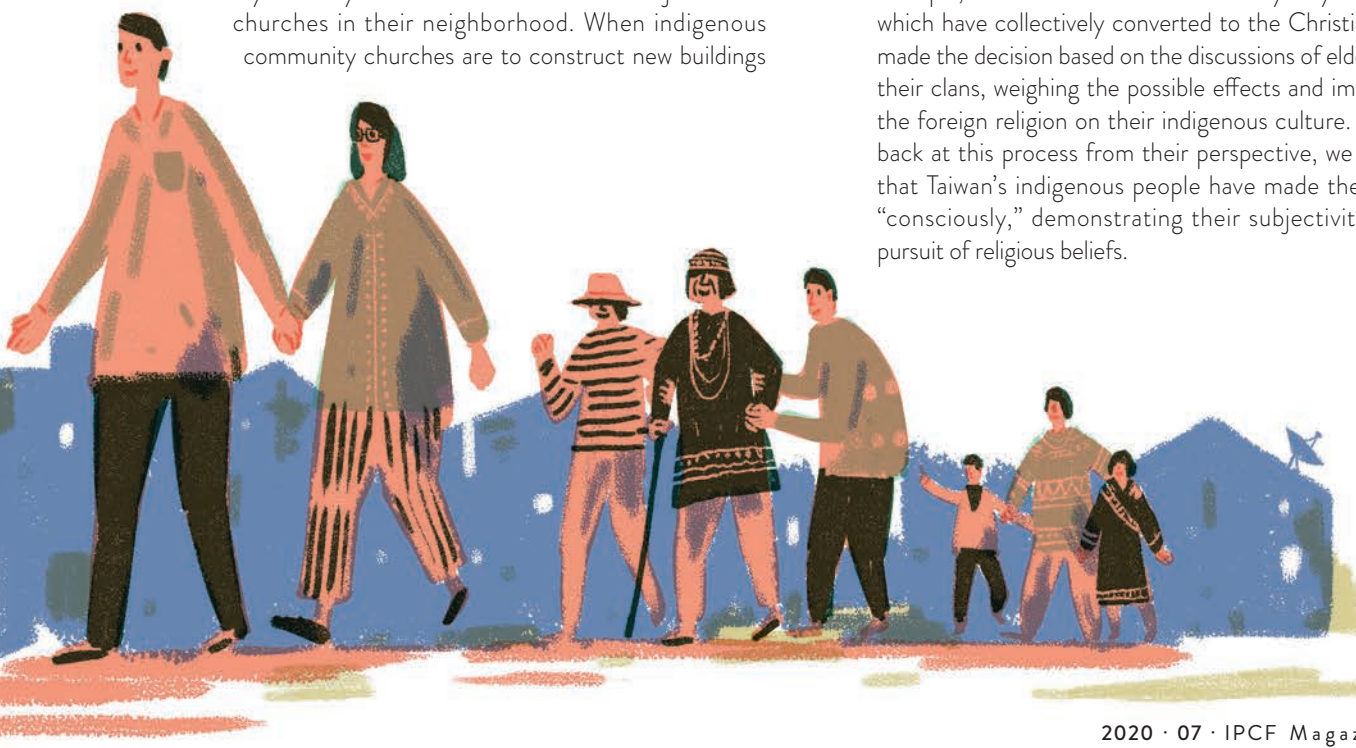
and expand equipment, their befriending urban churches will provide aid to meet their needs. With mutual reliance built over long-term friendship, these churches often refer to themselves as sisters, indicating a firm fellowship with each other.

Indigenous Subjectivity Demonstrated Through the Choice of Faith

Viewed from a colonial perspective, the conversion of Taiwan's indigenous people to Christianity tends to be attributed solely to the Church's ability to provide supplies and medical care that were lacking in indigenous communities. But if we look more closely at the contexts where both sides come into contact, we will find that in the traditional mainstream discourse, there has been an absence of concerns about the subjectivity of indigenous peoples.

Take for instance the Bunun's Naihunpu Community in Xinyi Township, Nantou County. The earliest record of its exposure to missionaries dated from 1947. The missionary also served as the administrative instructor stationed in the village but did not stay long because his missionary work proved unsuccessful, due to his civil servant status and the language barrier. His successors faced the same difficulties, which hampered the spread of Christianity. It was not until around 1950 when Hualien-based Bunun missionaries came to the Bunun communities in Central Taiwan that local residents finally had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of Christianity and the Bible, thanks to their common ground in ethnicity and language. Having come to understand and identify with the content of Christianity, the Naihunpu Community established its church in 1952.

There is more than one path for indigenous people to decide on whether they will follow a foreign faith. For example, some other communities nearby Xinyi Township, which have collectively converted to the Christian faith, made the decision based on the discussions of elders from their clans, weighing the possible effects and impacts of the foreign religion on their indigenous culture. Looking back at this process from their perspective, we can see that Taiwan's indigenous people have made the choice "consciously," demonstrating their subjectivity in the pursuit of religious beliefs.



Reconciliation Between Religion and Culture: An Ambiguous Conundrum

With the Christian religion being “chosen” as their new faith, indigenous people are invariably faced with such issues as conflicts between traditional values and cultural identity. These problems are addressed differently by the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church in their parishes. For example, the former would send foreign priests directly to indigenous communities, where they seek to gain the trust of locals by distributing supplies and paying respect to their culture. The latter, on the other hand, used local pastors to persuade their fellow villagers to abandon traditional beliefs and convert to Christianity, replacing indigenous customs with the more progressive and superior Christian practices.

Take the aforementioned Naihunpu Community for example. A parish of the Presbyterian Church, it adopts a gentle approach to striking a balance between traditional Bunun rituals and Christian activities. The church seeks to weaken the sacredness of conventional rituals by replacing them with Christian concepts and practices, which can be exemplified by the Christianized funeral of the community as follows.

In the Bunun tradition, funerals are considered “inauspicious” and therefore are closed to outsiders and solely attended by family members and blood relatives. But now the ceremony is completely handled by the church in a Christian way, allowing fellow church members to come to express their condolences and provide support. Such a shift has changed the views of villagers about funerals and the way they react to such occasions. In some extreme cases, the core values of indigenous beliefs are inappropriately replaced by existing Christian concepts. For example, in the translation of the Bible, “*quanitu* (ghost, or soul of the deceased),” the core concept of the traditional Bunun belief, is used to refer to “devil” against the monotheistic God. The meaning of “*quanitu*,” which is neutral in itself, is therefore distorted by the church’s improper use of negative association. What is worse, the church has always failed to respect and highlight the cultural significance embodied by the term, which ultimately results in the ambiguities and conflicts of the Bunun rituals in relation to the Christian faith.

Getting Lost in Faith

The ambiguities of their religious belief and original culture have also influenced the way indigenous people view themselves. Today’s indigenous Christians often refer themselves as followers of some generation, while non-indigenous outsiders may intuitively assume that all indigenous peoples are Christians. And thanks

to the fact that early missionaries have achieved great success in indigenous regions within a short period of time, Christians of mainstream denominations in Taiwan are generally full of praise and admiration to the indigenous community for their “piety.”

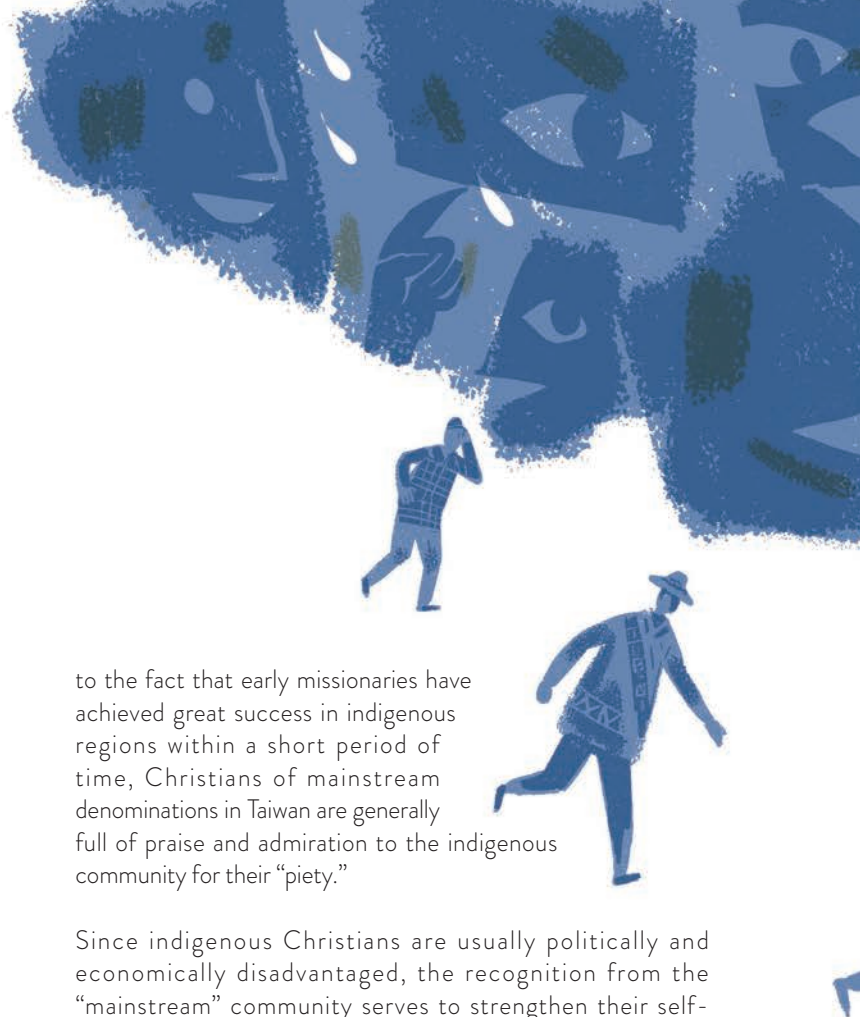
Since indigenous Christians are usually politically and economically disadvantaged, the recognition from the “mainstream” community serves to strengthen their self-identification and a strong sense of superiority in being “Christians.” Yet this also aggravates the microaggression held by the mainstream society toward ethnic minorities, giving rise to unintentional prejudice revealed by behavior in daily interaction.

Taiwan’s mainstream Christian community typically assume that indigenous people are “optimistic by nature,” which helps draw them closer to Christian values. But such misconception has confined the definition of indigenous Christians to a narrowing set of criteria. That is, those who are less optimistic than expected or fail to act in a way to bring them “nearer to God” would not only be considered unqualified as Christians, but also lose their assumed trademark of being indigenous as well. Such dual negation can result in a collapse of their self-identification and pressures from being a member of the church.

As a result, many indigenous Christians often choose to remain silent behind the mainstream values of the faith. Nowadays controversial issues about diversified Christian teachings, such as the translation of the Bible, the passing on of shamanism, and marriage equality, have been discussed by churches in non-indigenous areas. In indigenous areas, however, dissidents with different views to traditional values are muted by the church, which seeks to suppress the subjectivity of the community with its because they want to maintain their assumed image as a model of God’s miracles. This has resulted in the constant marginalization of indigenous Christians who are deprived of opportunities to voice their opinions.

Speak Up for Your Freedom of Faith

Although everyone has equal rights to enjoy the freedom of faith, indigenous peoples, however, are robbed of the right to





interpret their identity in terms of region beliefs. They are one-sided and limited in their imagination of subjectivity due to the colonization of the mainstream society. In the eyes of the church, indigenous communities are reduced merely to figures showcasing the success of missionary work or viewed as decorative motifs that highlight the features of churches in Taiwan.

The neglect of indigenous traditions and cultures by both the state and the church has deprived indigenous peoples of the value system and cultural identity they live by, as well as the ability to understand and interpret their own culture. Yet, it is in the process of “identifying with the new faith” that indigenous peoples have rediscovered the dignity and significance of their lives. This in turn triggers their collective conversion to Christianity and the rapid establishment of churches in

indigenous areas, which indirectly contributes to the “miracles of the 20th century” of which the Church in Taiwan is so proud.

It is just that the indigenous community is undeniably the most disadvantaged in Taiwan’s Christian society in terms of resources, financial conditions, and distribution of power when viewed in terms of the missionary history of Western religions and interaction between the Church and indigenous peoples in Taiwan. It is difficult for Taiwan’s indigenous Christians to have a say in the church. To indigenous peoples, the church plays an ambivalent role. On the one hand, it serves as a spiritual home where they can find a sense of belonging, On the other hand, it restricts the development of their religious diversity. With this in mind, we must accept and bear the result of colonization in history and develop the ability to make independent value judgments. Only by doing so can we genuinely enjoy the freedom of faith. ❖

When Saysiyat Meets Hakka

Amid the November evening breeze, at Nanzhuang Township's Raremewan, Miaoli County, a low and solemn sacrificial song is heard. Accompanied by the rhythm of "Tabaa'sang", a traditional kind of Saysiyat musical instrument, the song raises the curtain on the biennial paSta'ay (Dwarf spiritual sacrifice) that unique to Taiwan's indigenous Saysiyat people. Nanzhuang Township is known as the hometown of the Saysiyat people. But almost every resident here speaks Hakka. They also follow the non-indigenous Hakka customs such as making offerings to Earth Lord "Old Uncle," worshiping ancestral tablets at home, and even hanging strips of paper on the headstones when sweeping their ancestral tombs. How do the Saysiyat people, who once featured an indigenous culture of revering the Nature, respecting the "ta'ay" with awe, and worshipping ancestral spirits in traditional ways, come to meet and interact with Hakka culture, and in turn change their original values of faith?

Written by Jiang Tian-Jun; Illustrated by Lin Jia-Dong

The Saysiyat's Views on Divinity and Its Major Rituals

Like many of their counterparts around the world, the indigenous peoples in Taiwan believe that everything in heaven and earth is dominated by a mighty supernatural power beyond the control of human beings. This notion gives rise to their worship of nature, in which people believe that they will be bestowed with blessings and happiness when they show great respect for the dominators of various natural powers.

The Saysiyat believe that between a living person's head and chest hides "azem" (soul), which is considered the hub that governs one's thinking. When an infant is born, with its skull bones remaining open, the brain beats with the pulse, therefore marking the existence of its soul. When one dies, his/her 'azem becomes "habon" (spirit), with the distinction between male and female as well as good and evil. The spirits of the deceased will not disappear but instead are linger around those left behind. On special days and occasions, ancestral spirits will return to reunite with their descendants.

What the Saysiyat is most famous for is its belief in the spirit of ta'ay, which originates from the legend of ta'ay who are said to have lived side-by-side with the community. Legend has it that it was these dwarves who had taught the Saysiyat people arts of farming. But they were entrapped and exterminated by their Saysiyat neighbors in the end. To express their gratitude intertwined with guiltiness and fear, the Saysiyat make it a custom to hold a series of rituals known as "paSta'ay" to comfort the spirits of ta'ay. Based on their belief, the "habon" of ta'ay will return to the village during the rituals. Therefore, there are various taboos to be avoided lest punishments be imposed by these spirits.

In addition to the well-known "paSta'ay," the Saysiyat people also hold other various traditional rituals that have been passed down for generations, such as "pasbaki"(ancestral ritual), "oe'owaz"(weather-praying ritual), and "pat-aza" (sawing ritual). All the community members take these rituals very seriously. Every year, they make it a point to return home to participate, even the younger generation is no exception.



The Hakka Beliefs

The worship of deities, ancestors, as well as ghosts and spirits constitute the core of Hakka religious beliefs. The Hakkas traditionally believe that when elders pass away, their spirits will “be elevated to gods” or “return to the ranks of immortals.” Hence, they make it a custom to worship ancestors, who are constantly being “deified.” The immortalized ancestors are considered to have a mysterious power that enables them to watch the behavior of their descendants from time to time and provide blessings for peace and safety to each household. The Hakka ancestral worshipping is termed as “making offerings to Grandpa and Grandma,” which is held on seasonal festivals and major life events, such as births, marriages, and deaths.

Apart from worshipping ancestors, there is a tomb sweeping activity called “paper hanging,” which takes place on a specific date of the year. At the end of it, strips of paper are hung on the headstone to mark the completion of the task. Chungyuan Festival (the Ghost Festival), which falls on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, is a major event in the Hakka tradition. On the evening of this day, the “pudu” ceremony is held by every household at the doorstep of their homes, where sacrifices and foods are offered to wandering ghosts, or “good brothers.”

A Mix of Saysiyat and Hakka Cultures

The traditional worldview of the Saysiyat people is a dichotomous one featuring the mundane world of living creatures against the spiritual world alone, which forms a sharp contrast to that of the Hakka’s emphasizing the coexistence of human beings, ghosts, and deities. However, since the 17th century, the lifestyles and living habits of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples have been affected by the rule of many foreign regimes starting from the Ming-Zheng period. Take Nanzhuang, which was at first resided by the Saysiyat, for example. In the early days, the booming camphor industry attracted large numbers of Hakka people to move in, resulting in the contact between the two ethnic groups. In the late Qing Dynasty, although boundaries were made to prevent physical contact between Non-indigenous Chinese and the Saysiyat, the interaction of both sides had nonetheless never been deterred. Over time, it turns out that the Saysiyat have adopted the Hakka custom of worshipping ancestors, deities, and ghosts, and further incorporated some Hakka practices into their own beliefs, bringing a different appearance to their religious culture.

The Saysiyat call their elders are “tatini.” With reverence for their ancestral spirits, the Saysiyat believe that after the death of tatini, their souls will live on in the spiritual world, remaining in the communities to watch over their descendants. Despite such belief in spirits, however, in the past they did not seek to materialize the existence of unseen tatini, nor did they ever think of making a home for them.



Over time, thanks to the frequent contact with the Hakka community, the Saysiyat gradually come to appreciate the advantages of worshipping ancestors. The Saysiyat people are then motivated to reflect on the way they treat their ancestors. Instead of following the tradition of burying the dead in the house, they begin to set up ancestral tablets at home and build graves for the ancestors. The existence of invisible ancestral spirits is thus manifested physically and symbolized in the forms of tablet and graveyard. Following the Hakka religious custom, the Saysiyat also “care for” their tatini by offering food regularly.

The Importance of Caring for tatini, Alive or Dead

The Hakkas usually refer to the act of worshipping ancestors as “serving,” “revering,” or “making offerings to” grandpas and grandmas. In the Saysiyat’s rendering, however, such practice is called “pas’aelen,” which means “feeding tatini.” This is because they believe that their tatini are still living with them even after death. Hence, they make it a point to treat their spirits in the same way they care for elders by offering food.

Besides, the Saysiyat community typically comprises different clans, each of which has equal status. As each clan’s individual households begin to worship their tatini to pray for peace and prosperity by setting up ancestral tablets, the influence of Hakka religious belief on the Saysiyat is manifested. This indicates that the Saysiyat people are placing more emphasis on the personalized needs of individuals and their families. As a resident of Penglai Village in Nanzhuang tells us, although they were not of the habit of doing feng shui, now they pay particular attention to it and apply the principles to the placement of their immortalized tatini. They are also convinced that worshipping tatini at home may not only bring blessings to family members who are not doing well but also resolve difficulties of the family.

Innovative Transformation of Saysiyat Beliefs Through Cross-cultural Mingling

“*If Tatini did not kill anyone when he/she was alive, he/she will be incarnated after death.*”

Indoctrinated by the concept of reincarnation in the Hakka culture, the Saysiyat, who believe in the immortality of souls, have come to accept the idea that their ancestors



will be reborn and begin the cycle anew. They also learn to worship other deities aside from ancestors, which is believed to ensure a reciprocal relationship between human beings and the divinity. When people think their prayers are answered or wishes fulfilled, such experience will reinforce their faith and trust in the gods.

“After being exposed to the Non-indigenous Chinese, many of our ideas have been influenced. Take the Longshen (Wu Fu) Temple, a shrine dedicated to the Saysiyat’s legendary baki’ Soro (a heavenly giant snake). They manage it in the same way as Hakkas do by gathering a mix of different deities, from the Gold Boy and Jade Girl, as well as the Jade Emperor of Taoism, even to whatever gods of the Saysiyat mythology—you name it. I do admire this idea, though I don’t agree with it. Yet I still show my respect by offering support occasionally,” recalls a member of the Sawan Clan from Penglai Village.

It is only now that the traditional beliefs of every indigenous group are on the decline. However, if we study it carefully, we will find that the details of the present-day Saysiyat paSta’ay, including related ceremonies and taboos, remain nearly unchanged. The “oe’oewaz,” which is way more mysterious than paSta’ay and has more taboos to abide by, still allows no foreigners to participate. In some cases, even people from the same community but under different surnames are excluded from some of the rituals. As can be seen from these regulations, the Saysiyat people’s adherence to their traditional rites and

rituals allows no room for compromise in the face of social change and the greater environment.

Over time, with constant exposure to Hakka culture, the Saysiyat have learned to incorporate the Hakka religious beliefs and practices into their own culture. They not only adhere to their traditional beliefs but at the same time adopt the foreign concepts of Hakka deities. Such fusion has resulted in the creation of a new Saysiyat-Hakka culture unique to the contemporary Saysiyat communities in Nanzhuang area. ❖

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When Traditional Rituals

Are Shortened to One Day

Written by Liang Wen-Jing; Illustrated by Yamasaki Tatsuya

Traditional rituals are the core of indigenous Taiwan's culture. In 2006, the government officially designated such events as national holidays. Those who are recognized as indigenous by law are eligible to take a day off during their major events. But is this one-day holiday enough to meet their needs?



The Origin of Ritual Holidays

The concept of modern holiday originates from European religions, which gives rise to such examples as Christmas and Easter. After modern nation-states take shape, states around the world begin to designate



public holidays to commemorate their folk or political events. The purpose is twofold: to create collective memories of the public and to foster national ideology. As a type of folk holiday, ritual holidays represent the accumulation of life experiences of a certain indigenous group, which is embodied in the form of rituals and ceremonies teeming with cultural significance. The designation of such holidays helps to shape the identity of indigenous peoples.

In Taiwan, to highlight the diverse ethnicity of our society and embody the ideal of equality, amendments were made to the Article 4 of Implementation Measures for Memorial Days and Holidays, including indigenous rituals and ceremonies to the list of folk holidays. Since 2006, those who are recognized as one of the 16 indigenous peoples by law are eligible to take a day off during their traditional rituals.



How to Apply for a Ritual Holiday?

As is stipulated, indigenous citizens are eligible to ask their employers for a day off based on the Calendar of Indigenous Ritual Holidays released annually by the Council of Indigenous peoples. For application, the household registration certificate or any documents that can represent the applicant's identity are required.



A ritual holiday is paid leave. If the leave request is denied, overtime pay on the part of employers is mandatory in lieu of the holiday.



The leave request approved. Community members book their tickets to return home.



A One-day Holiday far from Enough

According to Article 4 of Implementation Measures for Memorial Days and Holidays, the statutory folk holidays in Taiwan include Chinese New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year, Tomb-sweeping Day, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and holidays for various indigenous rituals and ceremonies. Most of these holidays last only one day, except for the Chinese New Year, which is celebrated over a time span of three days. Compared in terms of the total number of days, the indigenous ritual holiday, which is designated individually from different ethnic groups, is disproportionately outnumbered by other Non-indigenous-Chinese oriented folk holidays by 1 to a minimum of 7 days each year.

Nowadays, cities have seen a large number of indigenous people living and working away from their homeland. To attend traditional rituals, they often have to travel a long way back home. Travelling back and forth might take them at least two days. What is more, there is plenty of preparation to be done, although it might differ from ethnic group to ethnic group. With only one day off, it is extremely difficult for returning community members to get involved in preparatory work.

Also, the official Calendar of Indigenous Ritual Holidays can only serve as a reference for community members to request a day off from their employers. But it fails to cover the date of events for all the indigenous communities since the exact date might differ from village to village. Hence, many people have to present posters, invitations, and other relevant documents as proof when filing a leave request, while their employers might make things difficult by denying it purposely.

The failure to achieve the original intent and expected result of designating ritual holidays is due to the authority's neglect of varied cultural characteristics across Taiwan's indigenous peoples. There are multiple rituals and ceremonies to be held annually by various ethnic groups. According to the official calendar, however, each of Taiwan's 16 indigenous peoples has only one important ritual included. Take the Paiwan's Maljeveq for instance. Although no less significant than Masalut (harvest ritual), it is not designated as an official ritual holiday.

The Passing on of Culture Threatened by Simplification of Rituals

Recent years have seen a growing trend of leisure culture, and holidays originally meant for commemorative



purposes have come to be viewed as a time “for an outing.” However, for indigenous peoples, who have been subjected to severe modern cultural impact, traditional rituals and ceremonies are far from an ordinary holiday just for rest and outings. Nor are they a festive occasion to be celebrated simply by singing and dancing in full costume. Rather, they serve to embody the values of their lifestyles, knowledge, beliefs, and ethical norms through the passing on of traditional practices from generation to generation.

Take the Pangcah's Kiwit Community as an example. In the month ahead of the traditional Komolis (fishing ritual), by tradition, such tasks as woodchopping and harvesting the plant called thickfruit milletia are to be taken by the





young members from the village's age hierarchy system. But nowadays with most young people moving out to work elsewhere, these tasks are left unattended due to the severe manpower shortage. This not only imposes a threat to the community's age hierarchy tradition but also gives rise to the remaining members' call for canceling the event.

To facilitate community members returning from elsewhere with limited time available, many villages choose to simplify their rituals by reducing them to one day or a half-day. In other cases, the younger generation of some urban indigenous people, growing up with weak ties with their ancestral homes, might participate the event less frequently due to the difficulties in obtaining a day off under the existing mechanism. This has imperceptibly threatened the continuation of indigenous culture.

Traditional Ritual Holidays in Malaysia

In the case of Malaysia, which like Taiwan is a multi-ethnic country, holidays are divided into two types: national public holidays and non-national public holidays

designated respectively by state and federal territory governments. The former includes folk holidays of Malaysia's three major ethnic groups, such as Chinese New Year, the Indian Deepavali (Sarawak excluded), and the Islamic Awal Muharam (Maal Hijrah). The latter includes the Pesta Kaamatan (harvest festival) of the Kadazan Dusun people in Sabah, and the Gawai Dayak (harvest festival) celebrated by the Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu peoples.

How to designate and celebrate national holidays is an inevitable issue for multi-ethnic countries. To strike a balance between economic and social development, ethnic equality, and passing on of cultural heritage, while at the same time to create a more friendly environment for indigenous peoples, the authorities must make a careful consideration in dealing with it. ❖

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ISSN 2313-111-X
9 772313 111001