

## Death, Emotions, and Social Change among the Austronesian-Speaking Bunun of Taiwan

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### Abstract

Focusing on the analysis of mortuary rites, this article explores how the Bunun, an Austronesian-speaking indigenous people of Taiwan, conceptualize and deal with death in particular historical contexts. It suggests that death rituals should not be treated as self-contained wholes or closed symbolic systems but as busy intersections of multiple social processes. The paper examines how colonial policies and the introduction of Christianity have transformed the ways in which death is dealt with among the Bunun, and how they continue to pose questions on how to deal with rage in grief for this formerly headhunting group by producing hesitations and disagreements over the moral and social propriety of alternative ritual forms. When the consequences of social change are taken seriously, the extent to which ritual forms organize and shape the experience of mourning needs to be reconsidered.

**Keywords:** the Bunun, mortuary ritual, emotion, Christianity, social change

In his heartrending article “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage” [1989], Renato Rosaldo relates how his devastating personal loss enabled him to understand the Ilongot experience of bereavement and the cultural force of emotions. At the time of his fieldwork, he brushed aside Ilongot men’s brief statements that the rage in grief impelled them to headhunt as too simple, thin, opaque, implausible, or unsatisfying, and attempted to find a “deeper” explanation for headhunting. Only when he found rage in the bereavement caused by his wife Michelle Rosaldo’s accidental death in 1981 was he better able to grasp the force of grieving Ilongot men’s desire to vent their rage. Although Ilongot anger and the author’s own overlap, they are not identical. Alongside striking similarities, significant differences in tone, cultural form, and human consequences distinguish the “anger” animating the respective ways of grieving.

The emotions aroused at the time of death have drawn the attention of anthropologists since the seminal works of Émile Durkheim [1995] and Robert Hertz [1960]. Their works highlighted the socially constructed nature of emotions, and successfully challenged the psychological assumption that emotions

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are peculiarly private and individual. Today, sociocultural constructionism remains the dominant paradigm in the anthropological studies of emotional responses to death [Geertz 1960; 1973; Humphreys 1981; Wikan 1989; 1990; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Maschio 1994]. The sociological and symbolic analysis pioneered by Durkheim and Hertz are also the most influential in the anthropological studies of mortuary rites. Renato Rosaldo's writing is within the tradition of constructionism. However, he is critical of the classic approach, which considers death under the rubric of ritual rather than bereavement, and its tendency to see ritual as a self-contained sphere of deep cultural activity. According to him, this approach leads most anthropological studies of death to eliminate emotions by assuming the position of the most detached observer, distancing themselves from the tears and agony [see also Palgi and Abramovitch 1984; Rosaldo 1988; Fabian 1991]. In contrast with the microcosmic view of ritual, he proposes an alternative view of ritual as a busy intersection where multiple processes crisscross. From this perspective, Ilongot headhunting stands at the confluence of three distinct processes: historical conditions, young men coming of age, and the agonies of loss caused by death. When the impact of historical factors on raiding and the cultural force of emotions are taken into full account, the dilemma faced by the Ilongot after Marcos declared martial law in 1972—a dilemma that had once eluded him—becomes clear. When headhunting became impossible as a means of venting rage and thereby lessening grief, the Ilongot considered conversion to Christianity as a means of coping with their bereavement.

Rosaldo does not explain how Christianity has helped the Ilongot cope with their grief. Is it simply because conversion to Christianity entails a rejection of the past? Is it because the converts now believe that the deceased has departed for a better world [Rosaldo 1989: 4]? Or is it because Christianized mortuary rites are effective in organizing and orchestrating emotional reactions to death? These questions need to be investigated. This article will explore how a formerly headhunting indigenous people of Taiwan, the Bunun, conceptualize and deal with death in a Christianized context. It follows Rosaldo's lead in treating death rituals not as a self-contained whole or closed symbolic system but as a busy intersection of multiple social processes [see also Geertz 1973; Kiong and Schiller 1993; Waterson 1993; Aggarwal 2001], and examines how the Bunun construct their relationship with the dead in a field with a nuanced, variable, and shifting range of possibilities. I will first situate the Bunun in ethnographic and historical contexts. Then I will give a depiction of contemporary death rituals, and heed especially the relationship between the living and the dead. After showing how the Bunun confront the transience of life, I will examine how colonial policies and the introduction of Christianity have transformed the ways in which death is dealt with, and how they continue to pose questions for how to deal with rage in grief by producing hesitations and disagreements over the moral and social propriety of alternative ritual forms.

## The Ethnographic and Historical Settings

The Bunun are one of the 14 officially recognized Austronesian-speaking indigenous peoples of Taiwan. They inhabit the mountainous areas of Central and Southern Taiwan and are divided into five subgroups (Bubukun, Takitudu, Takebanuaz, Takivatan, Takibahka). Before the Japanese colonized Taiwan in 1895, the Bunun were shifting cultivators who lived in small clusters of large extended families. Kinship groups were organized according to the principle of patrilineal descent, and they were also the basic units of exogamy. Hunting, gathering, and the cultivation of millet, maize, sweet potato, and beans provided the Bunun with their subsistence. Their constant search for better hunting grounds and their success in headhunting and tribal warfare helped them acquire a large territory.

Headhunting and constant movement stood out as the Bunun's most salient cultural features in the eyes of the Japanese, and the colonizers took pains to eliminate these obstacles to the success of their "civilizing" projects. Since the middle of Japanese colonial rule, headhunting was pacified and the Bunun were resettled in large numbers to lower mountainous areas where wet-rice cultivation could be practiced. The attempt to assimilate the Bunun through a series of colonial policies by the Japanese, however, was not very successful.

After the end of World War II in 1945, the Chinese Nationalist government took over Taiwan. The Bunun were again subjected to colonial rule that aimed to assimilate them. The Nationalist government was much more successful than the Japanese in this aspect, and many Bunun today consider their way of life little different from the Han-Chinese way of life.

The introduction of Christianity also brought about significant sociocultural changes. The Presbyterian Church was established among the Bunun earlier than the Catholic Church. The former's first missionary, a Han-Chinese minister, reached the Bunun area in 1947, and the earliest Bunun converts were soon trained to spread the Gospel among their own people. The Catholic missionaries came into contact with the Bunun in the mid-1950s. Under the leadership of a small number of foreign priests, local catechists were trained and were largely responsible for the day-to-day running of churches. The proselytizing strategies of these two denominations are described by the Bunun as follows: "the Catholics use relief goods and the Presbyterians use medical work." But the difference is more of degree than of kind [Yang 2008]. Not only did these two denominations of Christianity adopt similar evangelizing strategies, they also joined forces in translating the Bible into the language of Bubukun, the largest subgroup of the Bunun.<sup>1)</sup> However, the Catholic Church showed greater tolerance of Bunun traditional

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1) The dialects of the five subgroups of the Bunun show some differences in vocabulary and pronunciation, but the differences in pronunciation are systematic.

practices, such as dream omens and observance of ancestral taboos, and gained wider support than the Presbyterian Church.

The people of Vulvul and Ququaz, the two villages where I carried out two years of intensive fieldwork, are predominantly Christian.<sup>2)</sup> Vulvul is a small village, with 35 households and 240 people; 26 households are Catholic and 7 Presbyterian. Most residents are Bubukun, but there are also some Takebanuaz. Ququaz is composed of 150 households and a population of around 900. In this predominantly Takitudu village, the ratio of Catholic to Presbyterian households is about 2 to 1.<sup>3)</sup> However, the difference is not so salient in terms of regular service attendance.

Readers may expect to see significant contrasts between the Catholics and the Presbyterians. However, the Bunun regard them as essentially similar and switches between them as unproblematic. Moreover, they take pride in the fact that there is no opposition or hostility but rather cooperation between the Catholic and the Presbyterian Churches in their villages. This is largely due to the pressure they sustain from the mainstream Han-Chinese society. As in many Southeast Asian tribal societies that seek to maintain an identity apart from the dominant culture by converting to Christianity [Tapp 1989; Kammerer 1990; Tooker 1992; Keyes 1993; Kipp 1995; Hefner 1998], the Bunun view Christianity as an emblem of distinction that helps them maintain a boundary between themselves and the Han-Chinese majority, who follow predominantly Han-Chinese popular religion and Buddhism.<sup>4)</sup>

Today, the population of the Bunun is around 40,000. Many of them migrate between the cities and their homeland searching for education and employment, another form of movement. The people of Vulvul and Ququaz are no exception. In both villages, death is an important occasion that brings migrant workers home.

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2) I started to do fieldwork in Vulvul for my master's thesis in September 1991. During my fieldwork I lived with a local family. They gave me a Bunun name and incorporated me into their household. In addition to kinship terms being used between my adoptive family and me, I was also regarded as a member of this household by other villagers. For example, I was counted as a member of my adoptive family and got my share when meat distribution took place in the village. After the initial six months of fieldwork in Vulvul, I returned to do more fieldwork for my doctoral thesis in 1997–99, and I also began my fieldwork in Ququaz. I had learned from my experience in Vulvul that while living with a local family helped me to form strong ties with some households, it also had its constraints; so for most of my yearlong stay in Ququaz, I lived by myself. I stayed in the house of a Bunun pastor who was stationed in another village and only came back occasionally. My social relationships in Ququaz were thus not developed through a local family but through my participation in church activities, both Presbyterian and Catholic.

3) Although there are a very small number of people who have not converted to Christianity, almost none of them remain resolutely traditionalist. These non-converts are generally not interested in religion, including Bunun traditional religion.

4) According to statistics [Barrett 1982: 235], in the mid-1970s 51.4 per cent of the population of Taiwan were Chinese folk-religionists and 41 per cent were Buddhists.

## Making Death Peaceful

I attended eight funerals in Vulvul and Ququaz during my fieldwork. Although funerals are not performed for everyone in the same manner but vary according to the category of death and the wealth and social status of the bereaved family, from what I saw and from discussions with the villagers, there was a fairly set pattern.

Most people die at home. Even though nowadays most Bunun can afford to stay in hospital for medical treatment, patients are asked to go home if the doctors think there is no more they can do. Also, the Bunun want to die at home, surrounded by their kinsmen. When a crisis is foreseen, close relatives are informed, and they have to drop whatever they are doing and go off to the house where death is imminent or has occurred. At the time a person dies, some relatives shed tears but there is no elaborate display of emotion. Although it is expected that those close to the dead, especially the spouse, will despair over their loss, it is not an obligation to cry, and there is no “emotional division of labor” between men and women [Palgi and Abramovitch 1984: 400; Hoskins 1987].

Meanwhile, preparations for the funeral begin. Men build a temporary roof with bamboo or steel poles and tarpaulins to form an extension of the house in the front yard, where the wake can take place. Some people are sent to the Han-Chinese funeral parlor in town to get funeral supplies, such as a coffin, white candles, flowers, a coffin shroud, a refrigerator for the corpse, etc. A photo of the deceased is also brought to town to be enlarged and framed.

When these objects are brought back to the house, in all but the poorest families the corpse is washed and changed with the help of Han-Chinese funeral specialists, then moved into the refrigerator in the living room to face the door. The specialists instruct the bereaved family to cover the entrance of the house with a piece of white cloth. Although some families also consult the specialists to decide on the date of burial, the latter's help is usually not needed after the corpse is washed and changed, since the people of Vulvul and Ququaz are predominantly Christian. Rather, a church leader is invited to help with the subsequent preparations.

After the corpse is ready, a table is set in front of the refrigerator. The photo of the deceased is put in the middle of the table, with two candles in front and flowers on both sides. Food, drinks, and in some cases incense are also provided for the dead in Catholic families. As the news spreads, relatives, neighbors, and friends begin to visit the bereaved and to keep them company. When they arrive, each of them approaches the fridge to view the deceased from a small window at the top and say a prayer for the dead. They often console the bereaved by commenting that the dead looks “peaceful.” The bereaved are softly encouraged not to be overwhelmed by their loss, because the time of death is not up to human

beings but to God (*Tama Dehanin*), who decides when to “call us back.”

Nowadays, the dead are usually buried within two to four days, or at most within a week. It may take longer if a date is chosen by a Han-Chinese geomancer, but such cases are very rare. The bereaved family try to bury the dead as soon as possible, otherwise they will be criticized in private. It is also a burden for the bereaved family—both physically and financially—to hold a long period of wake. In theory, a wake demands an all-night vigil. Although in practice the bereaved family do snatch some sleep each night, they are gray and exhausted by the day of the funeral. I have never seen the last guests leave a wake before three or four in the morning, and they must be sustained with drinks, cigarettes, betel nuts, and snacks.

A wake usually starts with a prayer for the dead led by a church leader. Meanwhile, some people have already begun to chat and drink, and to make a big fire for the barbecue after the prayer. People also play games of poker to kill the time, but no gambling is involved. In sharp contrast to pre-Christian funerals, the house of the bereaved is now filled with people, light, noise, and activity.

The obligations to help each other include not only attending the wake but also digging the grave, cooking food, and donating money or food and drinks. The dead person is buried within a short time, and help to dig the grave is required from patri-clan relatives, affines, and anyone else who might be willing. The bereaved family must in turn provide food and drinks for them.

The deceased is placed in the coffin early in the morning on the day of the burial, with a Christian service. Following this, the Requiem Mass or a burial service is held in the church or at home, depending on the attitude of the bereaved and the category of death. The purpose of funerals, according to the Bunun, is to bid the dead a good farewell and to make them leave peacefully. However, bad deaths still pose a problem today, especially for the Catholic Church. People who die bad deaths cannot be brought into the church. Although sometimes the priest is willing to lead the Requiem Mass, it is usually the catechist who leads a prayer for the dead before the burial. The priest will definitely not come for those who have committed suicide. In Vulvul, the Catholic Church flatly refuses to have anything to do with suicide; not even the catechist will come to pray for the deceased.<sup>5)</sup>

The coffin is carried by men during the funeral procession. Only the richest families hire a funeral car, which has a tape recorder in it with hymns playing loudly. After the funeral party arrives at the cemetery or the private land where the deceased is going to be buried, the photo of the dead person is put in front of the grave together with candles and flowers. Then a simple prayer or another Christian ceremony is performed as the coffin is put inside the grave.

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5) This strong distinction between good death and bad death is in fact a continuation of Bunun traditional concepts, which will be further explained later in the text.

After the deceased has been buried, most of the guests return to the house of the bereaved for a big meal, a practice taken from the Han-Chinese. Before entering the front yard of the house, everyone washes their hands in a bucket of water containing the leaves of calamus (*ngan*), a plant used to protect people from attacks by spirits (*hanitu*) in many traditional rituals. When the last guests leave the house after lunch, a suitable place in the living room is chosen to hang up the photo of the deceased. The white cloth covering the door or the television display cabinet is removed, and the tarpaulin extension of the house is pulled down. Then the house is cleaned and resumes its normal look.

After the burial, the relationship between the dead and the living continues, and some other rituals are performed for the dead. However, the form these rituals take varies considerably according to the attitude of the bereaved and the wish of the dead. Dream omens also play a part. It could be a Memorial Mass or service held one month later in the church, a Han-Chinese-style 49-day ritual, a visit to the grave one month later or at anniversaries, or the annual tomb sweeping in early April. More rituals, such as a chicken or pig sacrifice, are held if the living are troubled by the dead.

This simple description of the death ritual inevitably glosses over the uncertainty and the ad hoc feelings that are important elements of the occasion. Therefore, I will now give a more detailed example to evoke the sense of the situation when death occurs.

### **There Is Nothing We Can Do: The Inevitability of Death**

My adoptive mother, Cina Kim, was badly injured in one of Vulvul's numerous pig feasts. It was a sunny morning in June 1998.<sup>6)</sup> My brother Talum's boss, Cina Uli, had decided to kill a pig for her workers after a busy period of harvesting cabbages. The meat was distributed to the workers, but every villager was welcome to have a drink and to share the internal organs and some meat cooked in a big pot. Cina Uli bought some expensive red wine specifically for the elderly women to show her respect for them, so my adoptive mother drank quite a lot and became very drunk. When noon approached and my adoptive father was expected to return home soon for lunch from the maize field, Talum was worried that he would be infuriated by Cina Kim's drunkenness and beat her, so he tried to drag her home to sleep. She resisted and struggled, and unfortunately she lost her balance and fell into the big pot of boiling soup. She was badly scalded below the waist.

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6) *Cina* (or *Tina* in Takitudu dialect) means "mother" or "aunt," and *Tama* means "father" or "uncle" in Bunun. Throughout this article, when these terms are used it indicates that the person being referred to is in their mid-40s or older. People of this age usually have only elementary school or junior high school education and work as farmers.

Abus—Cina Uli's sister-in-law—drove my adoptive mother to hospital. Drunk and in a rush, she smashed into a tourist's car before leaving the settlement. She was unhurt, but Cina Kim broke her right arm. When my adoptive mother was finally delivered to a hospital in the nearest town, the hospital refused to admit her because the injury was too serious. So Abus had to drive several hours to a university hospital with a special center for burns and scalds. That was where my adoptive mother was later operated upon.

I was in Ququaz when the incident occurred. When I got the news and went to the hospital, my adoptive mother was in the intensive care unit, unconscious after the surgery. She had diabetes, so the wounds would not heal. The doctor dropped hints that she was not going to make it. When I returned home from the hospital, my adoptive father wanted to know what the doctor had said. I tried to tell him as explicitly as possible that her situation was dire. To my surprise he replied, with a gesture indicating death, that if she wouldn't recover it was better that she "leave" soon. After all, it was her fault. She shouldn't have drunk alcohol.

Every day after the surgery I tried in vain to persuade him to visit my adoptive mother in the hospital, and he always found an excuse not to go. The monkeys were eating the maize, so he had to scare them off. The maize was ripe and needed to be harvested. Then after harvesting, it was "Tomorrow, I will go tomorrow." Several tomorrows passed, and he finally went to the hospital on the day she died to bring her back home.

It was one month after my adoptive mother had been injured. Early on that Monday morning my brother phoned to say that the doctor had asked us to bring her home. It was our last opportunity to see her while she was still breathing. When my adoptive father, Talum, and Cian went to the hospital, Cian's wife Abus and I started to inform all close relatives by telephone. We waited anxiously and began to discuss how the funeral should be arranged. We were not sure whether this was a good death or a bad death and where my adoptive mother should be placed. If it was a bad death, then the body could not enter the house and could only be put in the front yard. Abus was inclined to think it was a bad death because my adoptive mother had died due to an accident. I went to consult Tama Vanu and Cina Malas, a couple in their 50s who were relatives of my adoptive family and were always patient in teaching me Bunun customs. They said it was a bad death (*ikula*).

The anxious wait was finally over when the ambulance arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon. At the instruction of the Han-Chinese driver, my adoptive father and brothers called my adoptive mother again, as they had been doing on the road, and asked her soul to follow them home. Then she was brought out of the ambulance and placed on the ground of the living room, facing the back of the house. Tears fell quietly from Talum's face, but he was the only one crying. My adoptive mother's breath was



maintained by a pump and a tube stretching into her mouth and throat. The driver told us to cut the tube off and burn it, and turned her body around to face the door when she stopped breathing. He wrote down the time, then left. To me, my adoptive mother was already dead. There was no sign of breathing, and her body was cold and hardened in the hot summer afternoon. But my adoptive father rejected the possibility that she had not died at home, which constituted a bad death according to Bunun tradition. He insisted that although she was not breathing, he could still feel a very weak heartbeat when he put his ear onto her chest.

We decided not to move her until the Han-Chinese funeral specialists came. Everyone except Talum and my adoptive father went to the funeral parlor in town to purchase the supplies necessary for the funeral. Talum went to the back of the house to cry quietly, and my adoptive father and I sat on the bench in the front of the house to talk. The first thing he told me was the dream (*daisah*) he had had when he was still looking after my adoptive mother in the hospital, before the operation:

I had a bad dream. I dreamed of your mother falling down from a cliff. I watched from a long distance and was extremely worried. I ran fast to the cliff to look for her. But she'd gone, disappeared. I couldn't find her. When I woke up I felt very bad inside me. I knew she would not make it this time. So I didn't want to stay in the hospital to watch her dying.

This dream was related again and again to visitors during the funeral wake. And the listeners would try to console my adoptive father by saying that there was nothing he could have done and it was Cina Kim's fate (*daisah*).<sup>7)</sup>

### **The Wake: Pity, Taking Care of the Dead, and Keeping the Dead Company**

Unlike in the pre-Christian past, the Bunun no longer practice indoor burials. Rather, the deceased stay in the house for several days and are then separated from their families and buried in the cemetery or on private land. When the Bunun talk about the wake, they refer to their pity and compassion for the dead, as well as the need to take care of them.

When my adoptive mother was brought home in the ambulance, we waited for the Han-Chinese funeral specialists to help us wash and dress her. They arrived at about three-thirty in the afternoon and brought with them the fridge and clothes for the deceased. The rectangular fridge, with four wheels and a shining aluminum surface, was pushed into the living room. Then the funeral specialists removed

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7) The Bunun term *daisah* has multiple meanings, including "dreams," "dream omen," and "fate."

the blanket that covered my adoptive mother. She was undressed and covered only by her bra and heavy bandages. Her body was very swollen, and some fluid flowed out of her mouth. I could smell the decay. Because of her condition, the washing was simplified. The funeral specialists wiped her face and upper body with a wet towel, and then dressed her in a white satin robe and covered her head with a white hat, both of which had red cross-stitch embroidery on the top. Then they instructed my adoptive father and brother to lift the body by grasping the ends of the sheet underneath, and put my adoptive mother into the fridge from the side door to face the entrance of the house. Before they left, they also gave us a piece of white cloth to cover the entrance of the house.

The first guest came after five. It was Tama Vanu, who had got the news that morning from me. He went inside the house, approached the fridge, and saw my adoptive mother from the window on its top. He was drunk but stayed calm and did not cry. After he paid his respects, we sat down on the bench in the front of the house to talk. My father told him about his dream, and Tama Vanu comforted him by saying he shouldn't mourn too much because it wouldn't help. What was dead was dead, and this was Cina Kim's fate. He asked my adoptive father when the burial would be and was told it would be in a week's time. Tama Vanu suggested that it was too long a wait: the weather was hot and the wounds would decay soon, even in a fridge. But my father said:

I pity her. If we bury her soon, she will be very lonely. I want to look after her and keep her company longer. One week is short. Sometimes the lowlanders [Han-Chinese] keep the dead in the house for more than one month.

While we were talking, my brother Kavas and sister-in-law Apas came home from the funeral parlor and joined the discussion. Kavas and Apas said they had consulted the funeral director, who said that this Friday and particularly next Tuesday were good days for burial and would be beneficial for the offspring. So my adoptive father decided the burial was going to be on the following Tuesday, eight days later.

Kavas and Apas brought home candles, incense, rice wine, soft drinks, cookies, flowers, three kinds of fruit, fish, chicken, and pork. Apas set up a table in front of the fridge and laid out the food offerings for my adoptive mother. She arranged the flowers on each side of the table and lit two candles next to the flowers. Then she put the fruit and cookies on the left side of the table and placed the cooked fish, pork, and chicken together on a big plate in the center of the table, with a glass of wine for each meat item in the front. This practice was similar to the Han-Chinese way of offering sacrificial gifts (*sheng-li*) to the gods, but not to the dead [Thompson 1988: 77–78]. Later, when the rice was cooked, Apas added a big bowl of rice to the table and stuck in a pair of chopsticks. She wanted to burn incense when

she prayed to my adoptive mother, but there was no incense burner in the house. She wanted to buy one, but my adoptive father said we didn't need incense since my adoptive mother was Catholic.<sup>8)</sup>

Food was offered to my adoptive mother twice a day, every day before the burial. Then the food was consumed by the family. Although the way in which food was offered to the dead showed Han-Chinese influence, the Bunun insisted that feeding the dead was a custom passed on from their ancestors. This is a practice valued by all Catholics. But the Presbyterian Church forbids offering food to the dead and regards it as idolatry.<sup>9)</sup> However, the ordinary believers explained to me why they did not offer food to the dead in more pragmatic terms: "What is dead is dead, so how can they eat? What's the use?" was their common response to my question.<sup>10)</sup>

Praying is another form of looking after the dead. For the Bunun, it is a way of communication not only between *Tama Dehanin* and human beings, but also between the dead and the living. Although praying to (not for) the dead is officially considered as idolatry by both churches [cf. Tan 2003], it is still a common practice among the Bunun.<sup>11)</sup>

### Historical Transformations of Death Ritual

The present form of Bunun death ritual came into being only about three decades ago. The people of Vulvul and Ququaz are well aware of its relative novelty. During the wake, they often comment on how death rituals are subjected to external influences and have changed over the years. The following account of how mortuary rites transformed historically is based on my interviews with the people of Vulvul and Ququaz.

In the traditional Bunun way of dealing with death, the dead were buried as soon as possible depending on the category of death. The Bunun distinguished between good death and bad death. Bad

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8) In fact, all members of my adoptive family were baptized in the Catholic Church, and Apas converted to Catholicism when she married into the family.

9) The Catholic Church also regards the offering of food, especially meat, to the dead as idolatry. But this objection is not strongly implemented by the parish priests, let alone the catechists.

10) Although Bunun Presbyterians display a different attitude regarding the usefulness of feeding the dead, they have no problem eating food that has been offered to the dead. Unlike among the Dutch Calvinist missionaries and Sumbanese converts studied by Webb Keane [1996; 2007], sacrificial meat does not become a heatedly debated issue among the Bunun, which articulates the relationship between agency, material signs, and immaterial subjects.

11) The Bunun pray to the dead to negotiate the latter's peaceful departure, not to gain merit for the dead or to aid their fate. Despite their difference in regard to offering food to the dead, Bunun Presbyterians' and Catholics' positions on praying to/for the dead are similar. No catechism is read to the dead by the Catholics. The usefulness of reading catechism to the dead is disputed between "traditionalist" and "modernist" Muslims in Sumatra [Bowen 1993], but it is not so among the Bunun.

death (*ikula matal*) meant an unnatural death, such as being killed, being bitten to death by a snake or an animal, drowning, difficult labor, falling from a cliff, suicide, or other violent situations. Those who died a bad death could not be brought back into the settlement but had to be buried hastily on the spot during daytime. Such a burial was so rough that it was called *minkulali* (throwing away a torn piece of cloth). It was believed that the “breath-soul” (*is-ang*) of the person would transform into a bad spirit (*makuan tu hanitu*) in the case of bad death and had to be avoided. No mourning was held for those who died a bad death, except that the bereaved had to rest at home for one day.

If the deceased died from old age or illness at home, it was a good death (*malahpa matal*). The *is-ang* of such a person was believed to leave the body through the fontanel (*tonkul*) and transform into a good spirit (*masial tu hanitu*). The dead body was buried inside the house, under the bedroom or the living room, on the day of death or the next morning.<sup>12)</sup> After the burial, the bereaved family went through a period of mourning (*ai-sang*). They had to rest at home and follow a lot of taboos (*samu*). They could not sing, clean the house, weave, drink wine, pound millet, sleep in the daytime, wash their face, or take a bath. In Vulvul, they also could not eat spicy food. It was said that eating spicy food during the mourning period would make one aggressive and quick to anger (*ma-ahvon*). In Ququaz, the bereaved had to put out the fire at home and could not cook for themselves, but relied on the relatives of their patrilineal clan to bring them food.

The length of mourning depended on the status of the deceased. It was one or two days if the deceased was a baby for whom the *masuhaulus* ritual had not yet been performed,<sup>13)</sup> and seven days for adults and children after *masuhaulus*. In the case of a good death, not only did the bereaved family have to rest at home, so did other members of the same patrilineal clan. They had to stay home for at least three days. However, apart from the bereaved family, no one had to follow any taboos or observances.

At the end of the mourning, the deceased was sent away in a cleansing ritual called *malanav* (literally, face washing). On the day of *malanav*, the bereaved family got up before dawn. They cooked some millet and killed a chicken to offer to the dead, and asked the deceased to leave peacefully. After the offering had been made, the bereaved family accompanied the dead to leave the house. They stopped at a quiet place near the river. An elder put two stems of couch grass (*pazan*) in the water and used it to pat and “wash” his face and body, and prayed for the removal of impurity. One by one, every family member followed what he did. Afterward, the elder tied the couch grass into a knot and put it in the

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12) It was a taboo to bury the dead during the night. Therefore, those who died at night would be buried the next morning.

13) *Masuhaulus* is an annual ritual performed after harvest on a full-moon day for babies born within the last year. The purpose of this ritual is to make the baby “truly a person,” not just a piece of cloth (*kulali*). If a child dies before *masuhaulus*, no funeral is performed [Yang 1992].

middle of the path to prevent the *hanitu* of the deceased following them home. Then they went home quietly and made a new fire (*mapatus*) to resume normal life.

As described above, the traditional Bunun death ritual was not complex or symbolically elaborate. The corpse was buried as soon as possible and did not become the most important symbol, as in many societies studied by Robert Hertz [1960], Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry [1982], and Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington [1991]. The focus of the ritual was not on the symbolic transformation of the dead, the transcendence of human mortality, or the regeneration of social and cosmic order, but on the forceful but problematic separation of the dead from the living. It was as though there was nothing to be salvaged out of the destruction of death; the best the living could do was to prevent further deaths by avoiding the deceased and the bereaved. During the mourning period, the bereaved were identified with the dead and were isolated. It was emphasized by the Bunun that during the mourning period the bereaved had to sit quietly all day with their heads bowed down as though they were dead.<sup>14)</sup> In both good deaths and bad deaths, other members of the community tried to avoid the dead and the bereaved as much as possible. Because of the belief in permeable barriers between the dead and the living, fear was a dominant emotional response to death. Even the bereaved family would abandon their house and flee in fear if they dreamed about the deceased frequently.

Under Japanese colonial rule, the understanding of death was one key arena in which battles were fought between the Bunun and their colonizers. Bunun traditional indoor burials were seen by the Japanese as extremely unhygienic and were banned. Cemeteries were established by the colonial government, and the Japanese also instructed the Bunun on how to use coffins rather than tie the dead into a sitting position with a linen rope. To the relief of the Bunun, colonial interventions into their death rituals focused on burial practices, and they were able to continue with other aspects of the ritual. They maintained a clear distinction between good deaths and bad deaths, and the newly built graveyard was reserved largely for those who died bad deaths. Many people's last request was to be buried inside the house, or at least in their field hut.<sup>15)</sup> The Bunun also maintained a sharp distinction between good deaths and bad deaths in terms of where in the cemetery the dead were buried. Therefore, during the Japanese colonial period, except for the place of burial and occasionally the use of coffins, Bunun death rituals remained largely intact.

The Nationalist government launched a series of policies aimed at assimilating and “uplifting” the

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14) There was indeed a remarkable similarity between the bereaved, who sat down quietly, and the corpse, which was tied into a sitting position.

15) Until today, most Bunun do not like to be buried in the cemetery and prefer to be buried on their private land, near their family.

Bunun during the 1950s and 1960s, which emphasized economic development, the cultivation of national consciousness and identity, the implementation of a modern legal system, and other aspects of modernization and “progress.” Religious life was also a concern of these policies, but the introduction of Christianity in the 1950s was much more influential and significant in shaping the form of death rituals. However, it did not sweep Bunun funeral customs right away, as catechists and pastors tend to claim. In the eyes of ordinary Bunun, what has changed most is the status of the bereaved. Under the influence of Christian teachings of love and compassion, the bereaved are no longer identified with the dead and isolated. Missionaries condemn such behavior as selfish and superstitious. They also dismiss fear of the dead as a sign of a weakness of faith. Death is now dealt with in a collective way as a problem for the whole community, not just a problem for the bereaved family and their relatives. This transformation was a slow process that took the churches more than 20 years to achieve. Only in the late 1970s and early 1980s did attending the funeral wake become more widespread and not just an obligation for relatives and church leaders.

However, changes in ritualistic forms do not necessarily correspond to changes in notions concerning the afterlife and the relationship between the dead and the living. In traditional notions, there was very little speculation about the afterlife and the spirit world. It was said that the *hanitu* of the deceased “went to a good place” (*ku sia masial*) or *asang hanitu* (where the spirits live) if it was a good death. In the case of a bad death, the *hanitu* either “went to a bad place” (*ku sia makuan*) or went nowhere and was blown by the wind and wandered miserably around the world. These places were not specified. Some thought the good place was in the sky or behind the rainbow, but no one was certain.

Until today, the Bunun remain very uncertain about the afterlife and the spirit world. Heaven (*Asang Dehanin*) and hell (*Vinsahtuang*, literally, the place of suffering) are not talked about much, and I never heard people mention purgatory. The Bunun are not sure whether the *hanitu* of the dead stay in their tomb or in the place they die for an unknown period and then go to heaven or hell, or whether they travel to all the places they have been in their lifetime and after this journey go to another world. Or whether they just wander around the world, or move between two different worlds. At the same time, the reluctance of the church to be fully involved in dealing with bad death and suicide implies that people who die from *ikula* cannot go to heaven but become bad spirits. Thus, one’s destiny after death is not determined by one’s actions or sins (*muliva*) but by the cause of death.<sup>16)</sup>

The spirits of the dead are believed to retain many desires and intentions. They can be mild and

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16) This is reminiscent of the popular Christian belief under the influence of the Counter Reformation that it was not necessary to take pains to live virtuously, since a good death redeemed everything, as discussed by Philip Aries [1974: 38] and Davis Moller [1996: 10].

gentle ancestors who look after their descendants. They can also be lonely and want the company of the living, which can cause the latter to fall ill. The excessive or prolonged longing and nostalgia of the dead for the living can be a source of ailment and misfortune even for close family members. Thus, interaction between the dead and the living is allowed only in controlled conditions, such as the annual tomb sweeping, when the dead are visited in their tombs and offered food and prayers. The spirits of those who died bad deaths are said to be angry, aggressive, vengeful, and jealous of the living because they cannot accept their own untimely death. They are harmful to every human being.

Although the purpose of contemporary Christian funerals is to “make death peaceful” and to regulate the disturbance of death into orderly routine, such attempts are not always successful. The thing about death, the Bunun often remark, is that you can never be sure. A sense of uncertainty and vulnerability is always associated with death, especially when in circumstances of bad death the attempt to routinize or to tame them often fails.

### **Bad Death, Suicide, and the Ambiguity of Death**

The winter of 1997–98 was a unique period in Ququaz. Eleven people died within four months. Three met violent deaths, and several more had untimely or unexpected deaths. Such a spate of deaths was unusual in recent years and caused much worry and concern. One Saturday night, when I walked down the slope from the Catholic Church with Tama Abis after Mass,<sup>17)</sup> without my asking, he started to tell me how suicide used to be dealt with in the past.<sup>18)</sup> Looking down at the lights of the village, he told me that if someone committed suicide the village would be in darkness. The body could not be brought back into the village. All the fires of every house had to be put out, water was thrown away, and millet was carried outside. The community ritual leader (*lisgadan lus-an*) would visit the bereaved and pray (*masumsum*) to the dead not to bring the living with her/him so that no more deaths would follow, and make a new fire for the bereaved family. Afterward, every household made a new fire, fetched fresh water, and brought the millet back into the house. This was a ritual called *anlulus*.

Listening to Tama Abis, I had a feeling that he had in mind the recent successive deaths in the

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17) Ququaz and two neighboring settlements, Buqai and Qatu, belong to the same parish. There is only one priest who resides in Qatu, so the Mass of Ququaz is held on Saturday night.

18) Tama Abis was in his 60s at this time. He was the catechist, but he was also a traditional spirit medium who continued to perform the annual *séance pistahu* [Yang 2006]. The reason for such a combination of catechism and traditional spirit mediumship was not only because the Catholic Church showed more tolerance toward Bunun traditions; more important, it was due to the ways in which Christianity was indigenized and how the Bunun emphasized the continuity—or even “sameness”—between Bunun traditional beliefs and Christianity [Yang 2008].

village. Shortly before my arrival, a woman had committed suicide by drinking pesticide. Her death was dealt with in the Catholic way, and Tama Abis led the prayers in her house. However, after that there was a spate of deaths in the village, and this somehow indicated that the woman's death had not been successfully mediated or resolved. The last *lisgadan lus-an* died in the 1960s, when Christianity had established itself firmly in Ququaz. No one was elected as the new *lisgadan lus-an*, since it was a time when old taboos and rituals were regarded as having less efficacy and importance under the influence of Christianity.

When Ulang, aged 38 and a father of four, drowned in the river at the end of February 1998, there was a strong sense of anxiety in the village. The reservoir upstream had released water the previous day, and plenty of fish had been swept down the river and trapped in shallow waters near the shore. Like many men in the village, Ulang took the opportunity to go fishing. When night fell and Ulang did not return, the family began to worry and villagers started to search for him. His body was found two kilometers downstream.

Ulang's funeral wake drew a large crowd. This was quite unusual for a bad death, but the experience of successive deaths had made the villagers worry about whether avoidance would aggravate the deceased and cause more death. Ulang was a man who had not stepped into the Catholic Church for years. At the beginning the church hesitated to act on his behalf, but in the end it helped in every way. The reason given was that Ulang's parents, who lived in another village, were good followers of the church. The catechist Tina Kaut denied that the church had made an exception for Ulang because everyone was afraid of *ikula*. She told me adamantly that the Bunun attitude toward death was changed soon after the introduction of Christianity, and that nobody was now afraid of death after receiving the teachings of the priest. However, although the Catholic Church tries to downplay the fear of the dead and to turn it into "loving memories" for the deceased, many people expressed their fear explicitly and didn't stay for the meal after Ulang's burial.

The people of Ququaz looked for explanations and solutions for the successive deaths. Besides the unresolved suicide of the young woman, two other explanations were put forward in different contexts. Once, in a meeting after Mass, Tama Tiang lectured us on how we should follow taboos (*matusamu*). He thought the reason why our village had suffered so many deaths and misfortunes recently was linked to the violation of taboos, for example, the taboos between brothers-in-law (*soluk*).<sup>19)</sup> He asked the congregation to respect traditional taboos and to behave appropriately. The next morning, Tama Tiang

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19) Brothers-in-law were expected to treat each other with respect; it was a taboo for them to quarrel or fight. However, recently there had been some cases of brothers-in-law getting into a fight after heavy drinking.



spoke again to the whole village through a loudspeaker.

Another explanation was related to the disturbance of *hanitu* in the village. The land of Ququaz had been obtained by the Bunun after their triumph in tribal warfare over their Qalavang enemies, another indigenous people of Taiwan, and many Qalavang had been beheaded in this area. The spirits of these beheaded Qalavang were suppressed under a big stone by the spirit mediums. However, the stone was removed in early winter when the landowner, a Protestant government official who lived in the city, hired a bulldozer to dig his land. No longer suppressed, the *hanitu* of beheaded Qalavang ran rampant and sought revenge from the villagers. Unfortunately, the few remaining spirit mediums were weaker than their predecessors and unable to control these *hanitu*.

After Ulang's death, there was talk about how we could turn the situation around. Some suggested inviting the bishop to bless us and to spread holy water around the village, because the village was haunted and "not clean." Some thought we should try to perform the traditional ritual of *anlulus*, described above. However, these ideas were discussed only in private, and no communal consensus was reached. Fortunately, although no communal action was taken, Ulang was the last casualty in this wave of deaths.

But this was not the end of the story. When Puni, a 26-year-old woman, was killed in a motorbike accident next winter, a modified *anlulus* was held the night after her burial. The decision was taken during her wake by the attendants. That evening, after dark, Puni's father-in-law announced through the loudspeaker that *anlulus* was going to be performed. He asked every household to turn off the lights, bring out the rice, and throw away some water, then pray by themselves. After the prayer, they could bring the rice back into the house and turn on the lights. Some Presbyterian elders were critical about the revival of *anlulus* and thought the Catholics should be blamed for not renouncing the superstition. Even so, they joined the community to pray specifically at the time when *anlulus* was held. To the villagers' relief, this was a peaceful and normal winter. No more untimely deaths or *ikula* this time.<sup>20)</sup>

In Vulvul there was no *anlulus* ritual, and the problems caused by *ikula* were at the same time similar and different. My adoptive brother Talum committed suicide 50 days after my adoptive mother Cina Kim's death. Since the Catholic Church in Vulvul refused to have anything to do with suicide, the way the family dealt with his death was unprecedented.

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20) I was told by a pastor of the Presbyterian Church about the revival of *anlulus* in the neighboring village of Qatu. A woman from there was married to a Han-Chinese in the city, and the marriage was a misery. In 1998 the woman's husband set fire to her and killed her. Her death horrified the people of Qatu, and her family requested *anlulus* to be performed, even though the woman's father was a pastor. In this case, the pastor of Qatu Presbyterian Church led the *anlulus*.

The day Talum died was when the family reunited seven weeks after Cina Kim's death to hold a 49-day ritual.<sup>21)</sup> This was proposed by a daughter, Uli, who was married to a Han-Chinese. That September morning all the siblings came home and went to Cina Kim's tomb, which was not in the cemetery but in the plum garden at the back of the house. They brought with them three kinds of meat (pork, chicken, and fish), fruit, flowers, incense, spirit money, and rice wine as offerings to the dead. After Cina Kim was believed to have had the food and received the spirit money burnt for her, the family went home to share the food and drank for the rest of the day.

Around midnight, everyone was totally wasted and began to quarrel. Talum was unhappy about his sister-in-law Apas's attitude at the tomb. He thought Apas had been disrespectful because she didn't burn the spirit money well but rushed to finish the ritual. My adoptive father, Tama Inqis, was angry that Talum was rude to Apas, and somehow also blamed Cina Kim's accident in the pig feast on Talum. He took a knife to threaten Talum. Talum was frightened, so he picked up a stick and tried to fend off the knife, but he missed the target and hit Tama Inqis's head instead. When he saw the blood on Tama Inqis's wound, he panicked and ran away. Tama Inqis ran after him with the knife and threatened to call the police. The police came and patrolled the village, but Talum hid at his classmate Alul's house. He didn't tell a soul about what had just happened. After drinking with Alul until two in the morning, Talum went home to the shed in his backyard. He took pesticide to his mother's tomb and drank it there.

Talum was buried one week later. It took such a long time because the family had to wait for a coroner to examine the corpse to eliminate any suspicion of murder. My adoptive father was so mad at Talum that he did not take pity on him, nor did he want to look after him. So the funeral was arranged mainly according to the opinions of his elder brothers. They wanted to invite the priest, but he refused to come, and so did the catechist. Therefore, they consulted a Taoist priest who was introduced to them by their Han-Chinese brother-in-law.

Because my adoptive father was so angry at Talum, he refused to spend money on building a tomb for him. Talum's body was sent to be cremated in town. His ashes were put in a small box, wrapped in white cloth, and kept in a tiny makeshift shed by the side of Cina Kim's grave, for he was only 19 and was her favorite child.

Cremation was unprecedented in Vulvul, and Talum's cremation had unexpected consequences. After the funeral, Uli, Kavas, and another brother—Lian—kept on dreaming about their mother; their

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21) This is part of a series of seven-day (*tzuoh chi*) rituals performed for the dead in Han-Chinese popular religion. The people of Vulvul do not know very clearly what it is about and always said it was performed after 40 days. However, as in the case of other Han-Chinese rituals they perform occasionally, when I asked them why they did it, they said the Bunun also "feed the ghosts" (*mapakaun hanitu*, feeding *hanitu*). To them, there was something essentially similar between their *mapakaun hanitu* and those Han-Chinese rituals.

brother Nihu, who had died violently seven years earlier whilst hunting; and their sister Ali, who had been killed in a road accident five years earlier. They all said the same thing; they could not find Talum. They looked for him everywhere but couldn't find him. People in the village knew their dreams, and wondered whether Talum's soul had been burned to nothing by the fire. How could a father be so cruel as to cremate his child?

Some people made a connection between cremation and the Christian notion of the fires of hell, and felt very compassionate about poor Talum's soul. Cremation was seen as a horrifying torture after death. This is very different from how cremation is understood in the West and in India. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, cremation has been seen as a modern, scientific, hygienic, and space-saving option.<sup>22)</sup> Its current popularity has to do with its nondenominational character, and it fits nicely with the atheist belief in the finality of death [Aries 1974: 91; Bradbury 1999: 16]. In India, cremation is a sacrificial offering of the self to the gods. Through the ritual of sacrifice, life can be wrenched out of death, and cremation is consequently an act of creation [Parry 1982; 1994]. For the Bunun, things could not be more different.

The question of what happened to Talum after cremation, and of what would happen to them, had bothered Talum's siblings deeply. Both their own dreams and the dream of the spirit medium Cina Abus were very disturbing. During Talum's wake, Cina Abus dreamed about their deceased elder brother Nihu. He rode a motorbike, stopped in front of the house, and watched the wake with coldness and anger. He said the death of Talum had been caused by the "violent heart" (*ma-ahvon tu is-ang*) of their father, and he was going to take his brothers, one by one, away from him and leave their father all alone.

Terrified by Nihu's threat, my adoptive brothers anxiously sought a solution for their problem. Some villagers suggested that they invite the spirit medium Cina Abus to perform a traditional ritual known as *ma-abus* or *mapunpaim hanitu* (driving out *hanitu*), but they thought she was now old and ailing and hence less powerful, and the ritual, in which a pig must be sacrificed, was expensive. In the end the siblings went to a Buddhist temple to have Talum "found" and themselves protected. They also bought an Eight Diagrams mirror from a Taoist priest and placed it on the top of the front door to prevent the spirits of the dead entering the house. After that, none of them dreamt about their mother or siblings.

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22) The government of Taiwan tries hard to encourage cremation for the same reason.

## Emotional Responses to Death

After attending several obsequies, I was struck by the “flatness” of the emotional expressions evident at these funerals and burials. This is not to say that emotions are not expressed or released, but that they are displayed in a restrained and reserved way.<sup>23)</sup> There are some moments in the ritual when outbursts of grief and wailing are likely to take place: the moment of death, and the moment when the coffin is about to be sealed and moved out of the house. However, in many deaths these energetic bursts of mourning are absent, and excessive grief is strongly discouraged.<sup>24)</sup> Moreover, when someone who is not close enough to the dead or whose relationship with the deceased is known to have been bad shows excessive sadness and bereavement, s/he is likely to be criticized in private or even mocked in public as acting or pretending, and the tears are likely to come from drinking too much alcohol.

Such a reaction to death is partly to do with the pragmatic and matter-of-fact attitude to death shown in the funerals I attended, namely, what is dead is dead, so what’s the use of grief and crying. It is also related to the need to protect oneself from longing and nostalgia for the dead, which can be a source of illness and misfortune.<sup>25)</sup> However, it is assumed by the Bunun that death rituals are sad occasions. The word for “funeral” is *mahavin* (to hide, to make [the dead] hidden) or *makaltun* (to bury). *Mahavin* is used much more often, for it is a polite expression that is said to be less hurtful to the listener’s heart. Also, I was told that the purpose of the ritualistic cleansing that marked the end of mourning in traditional funerals was to wash away the sadness of losing a family member.

It would be wrong to look only at emotions shown in death rituals. As pointed out by Rosaldo [1989: 13–14], human beings mourn both in ritual settings *and* in the informal settings of everyday life. The Bunun talk about a kind of day-to-day grief evoked by the memory of the deceased that “closes” the

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23) However, unlike in the Javanese funerals studied by Clifford Geertz [1960: 68–76], the Bunun do not attempt to achieve a “willed affectlessness.” Their reaction to death is also different from the “indifference” to death so compellingly described by Nancy Scheper-Hughes [1992].

24) Such emotional responses to death have been reported by others regarding the Bunun. Ying-Kuei Huang noted that a Bunun funeral in Taketonpu “is more a busy day than a sad day. From my experience, most people do not express their grief” [Huang 1988: 199]. In another article, he described the first funeral he saw there: “In 1979, I first attended a funeral of an old man. The body was laid out in the living room so the villagers could see him for the last time. Many people sat around, watching television, speaking and eating. Since it was prohibited to work that day, many youth played basketball. There was no atmosphere of sadness. It is not much different nowadays” [Huang 1999: 435]. However, Huang did not attempt to explore the reasons why the Bunun displayed restrained emotional responses to death and their connections to traditional spirit beliefs and Christianity.

25) Like many Austronesian-speaking groups in Southeast Asia [Geertz 1960; 1973; Wikan 1990; Hollan 1995; Hollan and Wellenkamp 1996], the Bunun value emotional equanimity in everyday life. However, the need to protect themselves from illness caused by grief does not make the Bunun go as far as the Balinese, who respond to death with laughter [Wikan 1989; 1990].

hearts of the bereaved and drives them to voluntary social isolation after the funeral. It is not unusual to see the bereaved stay at home for weeks, even months, after the funeral, unwilling or unable to work or to participate in social activities. Tina Ibaz told me how she felt after the death of her husband, Tama Joh:

It's a month now. I've stayed at home for a month. I didn't go to the church or visit anyone, and I didn't go to work. It is not *samu*, but I feel very messy inside to go anywhere or to do anything. I always cry. The only place I go is the grave of your Tama Joh. I go to see him every morning and afternoon, to pray for him and to check whether the candles are still burning. I take care of him, I offer food to him in front of his photo every day. I want to take care of him as though he's still alive. You see [the photo], he looks as though he is still alive and smiling at me.

If for the Bunun grief and sadness (*mahanimummun*) follow death, so does fear (*mapisin*). As should be clear by now, the Christian teaching that fear of the dead is a sign of weak faith, of not trusting in God's power and mercy, has done little to dispel such fear. I was struck by how afraid of the dead the Bunun are because they believe that the dead can come back. The second night after my adoptive mother's death, her sister Cina Niqa, who slept on her bed, dreamt about her coming back and asking Cina Niqa to budge to make room for her. Cina Niqa was so frightened that after that she refused to sleep in my adoptive mother's room, and needed someone to accompany her constantly at night otherwise she couldn't sleep. The connection between death, dreams, and the dead coming back is so strong that children the age of five know all about it. One afternoon while I was writing my field notes, I heard five-year-old Uli and her seven-year-old brother, Dahu—children of my adoptive brother—quarrelling. Uli grasped Dahu's toy and ran upstairs to seek my protection, and Dahu shouted at her: "Smelly Uli, I'm going to beat you to death!" Uli, not to be outdone by his threat, shouted back: "If I die I'll make you dream [about me]!"

Grief and fear are not the only reactions to death, but they are now regarded as "natural." For the Bunun, it is of central importance to human beings to be able to have these appropriate emotions. When my adoptive father displayed rage rather than grief after Talum's suicide, he was criticized as being "like *hanitu*," or "he was *hanitu*" (*hanitu* also means "devil"). And his heart (*is-ang*) was said to be "still in the time of the Japanese [the time of headhunting, that is], so angry and aggressive (*ma-ahvon*) that he could kill someone." Talking in these terms, the people of Vulvul were not only making their moral judgments but also contemplating how their emotional responses to death were, or should have been, changed by the process of colonization.

The Bunun used to be fierce headhunters. Headhunting was an important way of dealing with rage

(*cin-ahvon*) in grief, even if the loss of kin was caused by feuding or illness. The people of Vulvul and Ququaz often talk about headhunting in the past in celebratory terms, but they have had to make a break with such practice since both the law and the church forbid killing. My adoptive father, whose heart is said to be still in the time of headhunting, and who allows his anger and rage to run uncontrolled, is unable to justify himself in the present. His tendency to grab a knife, or even a gun, when he is outraged is heavily criticized. "Rage was very good for headhunting and tribal warfare, but not in the present. The time is different, you know, we can report him to the police," I was often told.

Thus, several decades after the suppression of headhunting by the colonial government and conversion to Christianity, the Bunun continue to grapple with the issue of how to deal with one's rage in grief. In his study on Ilongot headhunting, Rosaldo described how an Ilongot man converted to Christianity because with the advent of martial law in the Philippines headhunting was out of the question as a means of venting his rage and thereby lessening his grief over losing his son [1980: 288; 1989: 4–5]. It is true that cathartic violence is susceptible to changing political conditions and historical vicissitudes; however, I doubt that it was so straightforward and unproblematic for the Ilongot as described by Rosaldo.<sup>26)</sup> He never really explained or attempted to explain how conversion to evangelical Christianity helped the Ilongot to cope with their grief. If the cultural force of emotions was so strong as to move Ilongot men to take heads, it could not easily dissipate in the course of everyday life after conversion. How Christian ways of dealing with death help the grieving process should be analyzed.<sup>27)</sup>

Facing a similar predicament to the Ilongot, the Bunun have struggled to come to terms with the end of headhunting as a way of dealing with rage in grief. Several men committed suicide when confronted with the dilemma of social death caused by their wives' infidelity. My adoptive father turned to Catholicism when his eldest son, Nihu, died tragically on a hunting trip in 1992. He was very angry at Nihu for having gone hunting even though he had had a bad dream and advised him to stay home. Nihu had gone hunting by himself because he was the village head and local government officials were going

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26) Since 2006, I conducted new research among the Ilongot. During my fieldwork, I learned quickly that headhunting is not a thing of the past, even though most Ilongot are Christianized. It is true that in the 1970s and most of the 1980s, headhunting ceased due to the influence of Christianity. However, this did not mean that the Ilongot completely gave up headhunting or thoughts of it. In 1988 the New People's Army, the Communist anti-government force, invaded the Ilongot area and killed seven Ilongot men. The Ilongot were grabbed by their rage in grief, and men in several settlements, including a number of church elders, went on a series of headhunting raids. The Ilongot think that it is very difficult for headhunting to be eliminated completely. Some old men said that even if headhunting stops for five generations, it can still be revived. In fact, the latest headhunting incident I know of occurred in 2007 [Yang 2011].

27) The reasons why sociocultural changes in general and Christianity in particular have been neglected in Rosaldo's studies are closely connected to anthropological romanticism and the doctrine of salvage anthropology [Yang 2009].

to visit the village the next day. He wanted to be able to provide wild meat for lunch to show his hospitality. His body was found two days later in an area revealed to the spirit medium Cina Abus in divination. My adoptive father was in such a rage that he threw Nihu's photo out of the house after the funeral. He was angry for a long time. Gradually, my adoptive mother persuaded him to go to church with her, which he had not done for years. However, when his daughter Ali died in a road accident two years later, he was angry at *Tama Dehanin* and declared he no longer believed in Catholicism.

From the above, we can see that death evokes the emotions of sadness, fear, and rage among the Bunun. These emotions are described by Karen Brison and Stephan Leavitt [1995: 395] as “a core grieving process.” However, the ways in which the Bunun organize and express these emotions are not only culturally specific but are also subjected to historical change. The introduction of a new juridical system and Christianity has stopped the Bunun from regarding anger and rage as “natural” emotional responses to death. Such emotions, according to the new views, are best left in the past, in the time of headhunting.

### Conclusion

In this article, I have discussed how the Bunun conceptualize and deal with death in particular historical contexts. I have pointed out that the purpose of Christian funerals is to “make death peaceful,” to bid a good farewell to the deceased, and to disengage with the soul of the dead. The disruption of death is regulated by the ritual process to achieve an appearance of orderly routine. With the exception of suicide, the missionaries make no distinction between good deaths and bad deaths, and they instruct the Bunun to accept the fact of death calmly and peacefully because it is the will of God. While fear, anxiety, and excessive sadness are strongly discouraged, the congregation are urged to show love and compassion for the bereaved by consoling and helping them.

Love and compassion advocated by the Christian churches have become significant moral and emotional idioms among the Bunun. Attending the wake is the practice of such idioms. However, key pre-Christian aspects of dealing with death remain vibrant, and the Bununs' notions concerning the afterlife and the spirit of the dead have not changed much after Christianization. There remains a strong fear of the dead, because the barriers between the dead and the living are believed to be permeable. It is believed that the dead can come back to bring illness, misfortune, and death to the living.

The emotions aroused by death are contradictory. There is the simultaneous love of the dead person and fear of the corpse and the spirit of the dead. At the time of death, the Bunun feel most vulnerable, anxious, and powerless. This is all the more so when in circumstances of bad death the

attempt to tame death can easily fail. The Bunun take pains to avoid the repercussions of bad death. They try to revive traditional rituals or to experiment and seek help from Han-Chinese ritual specialists, but a basic ambiguity in the meaning of the rite for those who participate in it has further complicated the situation.

The ways in which the Bunun understand, deal with, and experience death have been subjected to different historical factors and processes since the Japanese colonial period. These processes include their traditional mortuary rites and related cultural notions; colonial policies, especially the suppression of headhunting; the introduction of Christianity; and the influences of lowland Han-Chinese religions. Different religious and ritualistic options entail different ways of dealing with death and of orchestrating emotions, and they have various influences under different historical circumstances and social conditions. From the controversies, ambiguities, and uncertainties generated by bad death and suicide discussed above, we can see how colonial policies and the introduction of Christianity have not only transformed the ways in which death is dealt with among the Bunun, but also produced hesitations and disagreements over the moral and social propriety of alternative ritual forms. This grants legitimacy to a position that questions the extent to which ritual forms organize and shape the experience of mourning. However, even though Christianity does not provide all the answers for how to cope with grief and deal with the dead after headhunting was suppressed, Bunun experimentation with method shows that the emotional intensity of mourning does indeed need expressive manifestation and management, and the form taken by funerals is still of central moral and emotional importance, even though their effectiveness is subjected to context.

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