

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a compilation of ethnographic narrative and ethnohistorical research in the form of a case study of the Bunun people of the Laipunuk geographic region of Taiwan. The research encompasses the life experiences of three members of the Istanda family, with cross verification of narrative history from extant documentation where possible. Informants were videotaped, audio taped, and where not possible, extensive and detailed notes were taken. Some informants also served as translators for others; one particularly valuable source is conversant in the Bunun language, Japanese, Chinese, and English, providing invaluable material and insight. This report begins with an overview of indigenous peoples, their prehistory, and their relationship with the greater Austronesian culture. This is followed by a brief survey of each indigenous culture's social organization, with emphasis on the Bunun. Included is a political survey of major transformational and developmental periods in Taiwan's history, beginning with the Dutch East India Company period, and ending with the modern Democratic Reform period. I have concluded, based on my extensive work with these indigenous peoples and my examination of available historical documentation, that Taiwan's indigenous people have endured constant pressure from external forces and, as a direct result, have undergone acute social and cultural degradation from the loss of their native homelands. Nevertheless, vast knowledge is still available from elderly informants born into a relatively pristine Bunun culture. This knowledge contributes to the field of *Taiwan Studies* by providing an objective survey across the history of Taiwan's indigenous peoples, offering a view through a previously closed window into the richness of Taiwan's *full* history. It is recommended that such studies continue and expand.

Key words: Bunun, Laipunuk, Austronesian, Taiwan, ethnohistorical, indigenous

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