

## Imagining the state An ethnographic study

■ Shu-Yuan Yang

*Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan*

**ABSTRACT** ■ Following a recent theoretical shift to view the state as a powerful site of symbolic and cultural production that is in itself always culturally represented and understood in particular ways, this article is concerned with how the Bunun, an Austronesian-speaking indigenous people of Taiwan, perceive and imagine the state. I point out that the Bunun use their own idioms of kinship and political leadership to understand and construct their relationship with the state, in order to transform the state from an external and potentially dangerous force into a positive and benevolent provider. In attempting to oblige the state to deliver material and social goods, the Bunun place emphasis on their compliance rather than their resistance to the state. However, I argue that compliance, rather than being passive accommodation, can be a kind of 'quite effective agency' in Ortner's (1997: 148) terms, and challenge the recent theoretical preoccupation with resistance.

**KEY WORDS** ■ the Bunun, the state, kinship, political leadership, election, the symbolism of money

In his preface to *African Political Systems* (1940), anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown proposed that the idea of the state should be eliminated from social analysis. He believed the existence of the state was not a norm, and the notion of the state as an entity having sovereignty and will was a fiction. Therefore, he argued that concepts of government, political organization and political system were all that was needed for political anthropology.

The position that the state creates mystification has been a common one since Marx (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Coronil, 1997; Taussig, 1992, 1997). Marx (1967) took the state to be, for the most part, an ideological construct and a means of domination. For Weber, too, it 'is a *claim* to legitimacy, a means by which politically organized subjection is simultaneously accomplished and concealed' (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985: 7–8; emphasis in original). This 'ideological' connotation of the state has been a major reason why it has long been rejected by social scientists (Fuller and Harriss, 2000; Mitchell, 1991a, 1999).<sup>1</sup>

Lately the state has emerged once again as a central concern in the social sciences. In an influential essay which helped to bring about this new interest, Abrams (1988) declares, in the spirit of Marx, that in the capitalist context, the state is a distinctive collective *misrepresentation* of capitalist societies. Although this makes our research more difficult, he argues that the state, like other collective (mis)representations, is a social fact, and should be made a crucial object of study. Bourdieu also outlines the problem of studying the state as one of escaping the 'thought of the state':

To endeavor to think the state is to take the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a thought of the state, that is, of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state and hence to misrecognize its most profound truth. (Bourdieu, 1999: 53)

However, he thinks we should not be deterred by, but rather armed with, the knowledge that one of the state's major powers is to produce and impose categories of thought that we take for granted and apply spontaneously to all things of the social world – including the state itself.<sup>2</sup> This knowledge helps us 'to subject the state and the thought of the state to a sort of *hyperbolic doubt*' (Bourdieu, 1999: 54; original emphasis).

What Abrams and Bourdieu propose is a demystifying, denaturalizing approach. This is also a basic position shared by recent scholars. Such an approach holds that the state should not be treated as a natural entity, system or apparatus, but as a historical and contingent constitution (Comaroff, 1998; Coronil, 1997; Fuller and Benei, 2000; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001a; Scott, 1998; Steinmetz, 1999). Under the influences of Gramsci (1971) and Foucault (1977, 1980, 1982, 1991), the entangled relationship between hegemony and resistance, questions of how the state rules, what kind of method and technique of power it employs, what its underlying political rationality or governmentality is, and how state effects are produced, have been formulated as the main issues to be investigated in state studies. To a large degree, the exploration of these issues takes a top-down approach, and I suggest that anthropology can provide a different perspective.<sup>3</sup>

In earlier anthropological studies, the state has been taken as an

unanalysed given or a stage in the evolution of political and cultural organization (Nagengast, 1994: 116).<sup>4</sup> However, there has been a new level of anthropological concern with the modern state in the last decade. Ferguson and Gupta suggest that:

... in part, the new interest in the state arises from a recognition of the central role that states play in shaping 'local communities' that have historically constituted the objects of anthropological inquiry; in part, it reflects a new determination to bring an ethnographic gaze to bear on the cultural practices of states themselves. (2002: 981)

An important theme running through the new literature has been, they continue, 'that states are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are in themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways' (ibid.). Although anthropologists are also concerned with issues of state effects, power/knowledge and governmentality,<sup>5</sup> compared with other disciplines such as political science, sociology and history, anthropology displays a particularly strong emphasis on the everyday formation of the state, and on how the state is constructed through the cultural imagination and everyday practice of ordinary people (Aretxaga, 2003; Burghart, 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Das and Poole, 2004a; Foster, 2002; Fuller and Beni, 2000; Gupta, 1995, 2005; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001b).

Inspired by recent theoretical developments, this article is concerned with how the Bunun, an Austronesian-speaking aboriginal minority group of central Taiwan, perceive, imagine and construct the state. I carried out two years of intensive fieldwork among the Bunun during the winter of 1991–2, and again in 1997–9. My two fieldsites, Vulvul and Ququaz, were both formed under Japanese colonial rule (1895–1945).<sup>6</sup> At that time, these two settlements had very different relationships with centralized authority. The Vulvul area experienced violent resistance followed by military pacification, and was under constant threat of artillery bombardment until the end of Japanese colonial rule. In contrast, due to their perennial hostility with another indigenous group, the Qalavang, the people of Ququaz sought a Japanese alliance against the Qalavang and demonstrated a much more friendly and cooperative attitude toward colonial authority. As a consequence, colonial policies were better implemented, and Ququaz was constructed as an 'exemplary settlement' by the Japanese. Although their relationship with the Japanese colonial state differed in the past, most people of Vulvul and Ququaz now describe themselves as cooperative, compliant and in tune with the government.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Tama Taugan<sup>8</sup> depicted their relationship with the state in the following terms: 'We Bunun are like cattle led by the government, very obedient. The government wants us to go east so we go east, the government wants us to go west so we go

west'.<sup>9</sup> The Bunun are also seen in this way by government officials. The officials often praise the Bunun as good cooperative citizens who are in tune with the government in official meetings and electoral rallies. In private conversations with me, they say similar things but in perhaps less complimentary terms. Once, a Han-Chinese official put it to me bluntly: 'The Bunun are a nice people, very pristine. In other words, they are easy to rule'.

This 'easy-to-ruleness' echoes what my friend, Vuya, a Bunun official in Haitung,<sup>10</sup> said about the Bunun. When I told him that I was interested in studying the relationship between the Bunun and the state, he thought that I had chosen a very boring topic. As he said, there was nothing to be studied because their relationship with the state could be easily summarized in one Chinese proverb: *zhong-tang-ai-guo* (loyal to the [Nationalist] party and love the state). The way the Bunun describe themselves as in tune with the government, and the taken-for-grantedness of their unproblematic relationship with the state in Vuya's statement, imply that they see their relationship with the state as straightforward, non-confrontational and depoliticized. We can observe that the state effect has been produced, and attribute it to the successful use of what Foucault (1977) called techniques of power. This, however, is only one side of the story. As argued by Rumsey, 'in practice, state and local forms of politics cannot be articulated with each other without having a substantial impact on both' (1999: 333). The Bunun's compliance should be understood as the result of the articulation between state and local forms of politics, rather than their passive acceptance of state power. Therefore, this article aims to explore how the Bunun perceive, imagine and represent the state in culturally specific ways which are influenced by their historical experience of being colonized. I will show how they view compliance as effective political action, and challenge the recent theoretical preoccupation with resistance.

### **The state as *sasaipuk*: provision, nurturance and looking after**

To begin with, let us see how the Bunun refer to the state. As the state is an introduced concept, it is usually referred to by the Japanese term *koku* or the Mandarin term *guo-jia*. When asked about the Bunun term, some people say the state can be referred to as *daulu* – the Bunun term for the Mainlanders who came to Taiwan with the Nationalist government after Mao came to power in 1949. This shows that the state is associated with the ruling ethnic group, and more generally, is related to the political transformation and ethnic interaction in Taiwan.<sup>11</sup> However, some elders pointed out that *daulu* is not the most pertinent way of referring to the state in Bunun, because it refers to China specifically. The state or the government, which are not distinguished by the Bunun, is better addressed as *sasaipuk*.

*Sasaipuk* comes from *saipuk*, a word with multiple meanings. It means 'to feed', 'to raise' and 'to take care of'. 'To adopt' or 'to foster' is *saipuk*, too. Adoption is *saipukun*. *Saipuk* also means 'to govern' and 'to rule', hence the state and its rule is *sasaipuk*.

The notion of *sasaipuk* is associated with Bunun construction of kinship and relatedness, and it indicates clearly the expectations the state is supposed to meet: to feed, nurture and look after the Bunun. When they explain to me why the state is *sasaipuk*, several people mention that the meaning of *saipuk* is demonstrated in the most direct sense when the road is severely damaged and blocked by typhoon, earthquake or torrential rain for days, the government helicopters will bring rice, instant noodles, milk powder, and canned food to the village. By providing food, subsidy and service to its people, the power and authority of the state are recognized and accepted. The image of the state as a provider is produced by the historical process of interaction between the Bunun and the colonial state, as both sides use the model of kinship to construct their relationship.

When the Japanese first colonized Taiwan, they met with fierce resistance from the Han-Chinese in the lowland. The colonial government was occupied with the task of pacifying the Han-Chinese uprising, and took a conciliatory approach to the aboriginal people. Material goods and gifts were used to attract aboriginal people into peaceful contact with the colonial authority and to win over their support, followed by an attempt to assimilate and to 'civilize' them. This is, of course, a means of control (Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs, 1911: 6). Among the Bunun, the provision of goods such as salt, matches, cloth, and tools has proved to be the most popular policy. Obtaining these goods was also the main purpose, on the part of the Bunun, to establish contact with the colonial authority (Lin, 1998: 10–11). The Japanese deliberately presented themselves as a provider, linked to the patronizing notion that despite their ignorance and stupidity, these 'raw savages' were also the children of the Japanese Emperor (Asano, 1988[1933]: 56). By providing material goods and new technology, the Japanese colonial officials could claim that they had taken good care of the Bunun.

The Nationalist government, which took over Taiwan in 1945, continues to use this political rhetoric to present itself as a provider and a caretaker, and to demand credit for it. During election campaigns, the Bunun are constantly reminded that they have been fed with the 'milk' of the Nationalist Party, and that it is time to reciprocate. Like parents looking after their children, the Nationalist government has done a lot for the Bunun. Since the Nationalist Party has given them so much, they must vote for its candidates.<sup>12</sup> If they fail to do so, the flow of government funding and subsidies will stop. This campaigning strategy usually works very well.<sup>13</sup>

As the state is perceived as a provider, the Bunun think that when suitable

means are employed, they can tap the wealth of the state and acquire all the resources they need. In their view, there are three main ways to make their needs known and to obtain state subsidy: applying in writing through the official bureaucratic procedures; protest and public demonstration; and making requests to government officials in person. The first option is considered to be the most difficult, partly due to their unfamiliarity with writing, and in part due to their uneasiness with bureaucracy. Even those who have graduated from high school and have sufficient writing skills often choose to rely on government officials for this task.

Protest or public demonstration is regarded as the worst way of making their requests and demands known to the government by the people of Vulvul and Ququaz. They themselves never organize any protest. Moreover, they do not like to be identified as protesters. Protesters are seen in negative terms, as lacking sufficient communication skills and as destroyers of social order. The following example indicates their clear preference for negotiation over protest.

The road that connects Ququaz and two other Qalavang villages to the outside is very busy from late October to mid January, when the maple leaves turn red in a nearby mountain resort. Tourists come by the thousands, even tens of thousands, to admire the beauty of the late autumn forest. The traffic on the narrow mountain road is inevitably very slow due to the unusual number of vehicles. The people of Ququaz and the neighboring villages suffer much inconvenience. At the end of 1998, the leaders of three villages organized a meeting and decided to express their resentment collectively to the National Forestry Bureau, the owner of the resort. No quick solution was offered by the officials in charge but they promised to do their best to solve the problem, or to see if the villagers could be compensated. One week later, the traffic situation had still not improved. About 150 people from two Qalavang villages blocked the entrance of the resort for two weekends and demanded employment and compensation from the National Forestry Bureau. The road became less congested as many tourists were deterred due to the publicity the protest had generated in national newspapers and on television. Despite being invited, nobody from Ququaz participated in the protest. Moreover, they found the action of their Qalavang neighbors unreasonable. As the village head said to me:

These Qalavang! They love to quarrel! They protest all the time. We Bunun are different, we like to sit down and talk things over nicely. When we village heads and representatives went to express our dissatisfaction to the officials of the National Forestry Bureau, they already agreed to look into the problem and to try to find a solution. We should be patient and give them time. Now these Qalavang protest and destroy our relationship with the government. Who will be willing to listen to and talk to us in the future?

This preference for negotiation and communication over protest and resistance has its roots in the past. In the Vulvul area, when the Japanese first arrived, there was fierce resistance and the people learnt a harsh lesson when they were massacred by armed Japanese police. Until the end of Japanese colonization, Vulvul was under the threat of artillery bombardment. In Ququaz, the Bunun discovered the benefits of negotiating with the Japanese before their Qalavang enemies did, and are still proud of their better relationship with the authorities. As I was often told: 'the Japanese found us Bunun easy to communicate and cooperate with. They loved us and hated the Qalavang.' Historical experiences have taught the people of both settlements that when the colonizers cannot be gotten rid of, it is better to negotiate and cooperate with them.

'Sit down and talk things over nicely', or making requests to government officials in person, is the most popular option and is also regarded as the most effective one. Therefore, the people of Vulvul and Ququaz always emphasize how important it is to have someone from their village or someone they know personally in the government and local council. They often encouraged me to take national civil service exams and to become an official in their area not only because I was regarded as being very good at writing, but also because they wanted someone they knew personally in the local government. However, most government officials are not relatives or neighbors, and great emphasis is placed on building personal relationships with them.

Eating and drinking together play an important role in the establishment of a relationship with government officials. There are two main occasions when the people of Vulvul and Ququaz directly interact with government officials: when government officials come to the village for meetings, policy promotion and inspection, and when they visit the local administrative center and government office. When government officials come to the village, they are well received and entertained, mainly but not exclusively, by local political leaders. Chickens, ducks and other livestock are slaughtered for them. Rice wine, beer and other drinks are also a must. When it's available, wild meat is provided and is particularly welcome by the guests. Entertaining government officials is an important task for local political leaders, and the villagers judge them by how well they perform it.

When the people of Vulvul and Ququaz visit the local administrative center and government office for land registration, welfare application or other purposes, and things do not proceed smoothly, they also try to solve the problem by entertaining the official in charge. I first learned of this situation from my own experience, when I wanted to obtain a copy of all household registrations since the Japanese colonial period, during my fieldwork. The experience of trying to obtain this information from the Haitung Household Registration Office was extremely frustrating. Despite two

official references issued by the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, which I presented to the Head of the Household Registration Office, and the phone calls the local governor had made on my behalf, there was no success after several visits. When I came home, still empty-handed after I had tried everything I could think of, my adoptive father asked me if I had any extra money. He told me the reason I had had so many difficulties was probably because the Head of the Household Registration Office 'wanted to eat', a desire he had judged possible from his previous experience of dealing with government officials. After my own deeply unpleasant experience, I heard of many similar instances from the Bunun. The request for a feast, whether implicit or explicit, imagined or actualized, could come from government officials irrespective of their ethnic background. For instance, a proposed pay rise for nursery teachers was boycotted by the council of Haitung township, composed entirely of elected Bunun representatives, not for the lack of sufficient funding but because the teachers had failed to 'express gratitude' to them. After the nursery teachers, all of whom are Bunun, paid for the council members to have a feast in a restaurant, the proposal was finally granted.

It must be stressed here that the people of Vulvul and Ququaz do not think offering a government official food and drinks is bribery, nor do they think the official's acceptance constitutes corruption. Rather, eating and drinking together with government officials is regarded as *pinaskal*. *Pinaskal* means everyone is happy, satisfied and blessed by each other. It is very similar to the notion of conviviality discussed by Overing and Passes (2000), which not only indicates a psychological or emotional state, but also includes a moral aspect, relating to egalitarian and non-coercive form of sociality. For the Bunun, sharing food and drinks often creates an intimate, convivial and, more importantly, an equal relationship among the participants. Sharing a feast can mitigate differences in status and it also enhances communication. At the same time, intoxication takes one's reservation and shyness away, and makes it much easier to make requests. It softens the heart (*is-ang*) and moves the listener to show pity and compassion.

From the above, we can see that for the Bunun, the state is not an autonomous, external entity separated from social life, but rather is constructed through their interaction with government officials. The image of state as *sasaipuk*, a provider and caretaker, is connected to the use of kinship idiom in the historical processes of colonization. However, there are significant differences between the political implications of kinship, as perceived by the Bunun, and as by their colonizers. When the Japanese and the Nationalist Party use the trope of parents and children to describe the relationship between the Bunun and the state, they place emphasis on the superiority of the ruler, and the attempt is to 'substantialize hierarchical

social relations' (Alonso, 1994: 385). For the Bunun, kinship is less about the construction of superiority and debt, and more about intimacy, protection and reciprocal moral commitment. They strongly emphasize that those with greater power should protect and show compassion and love to those who are weaker (Mabuchi, 1987[1974]: 232). The provision of food, money and other things, both in everyday life and on ritual occasions, objectifies such love, sympathy and protection. Also, the hierarchy such provision may entail is discouraged and downplayed by the Bunun. The acceptance of such provision does not lead to the loss or diminishing of autonomy. Therefore, the Bunun recognize and accept the government's responsibility toward them without perceiving it as diminishing their own autonomy.<sup>14</sup>

The notion that those with greater power should protect and show compassion and love to those who are weaker is not only applied to the domain of kinship, but also applicable to the relationship between political leaders and followers. *Sasaipuk* is not only a kinship idiom, it is also a political idiom. Since the Bunun conceptualize the state mainly through their interaction with government officials, it is necessary to examine more closely how they perceive them.

### ***Saspinal* and political leadership**

Government officials and local political leaders are both addressed as *saspinal* in Bunun. The Bunun do not make a clear distinction between various kinds of state officials. From the president to low-level bureaucrats such as the land registration officer, all are called *saspinal*.<sup>15</sup> As representatives of the state and mediators of the relationship between local people and the state, the Bunun apply to *saspinal* similar expectations of the state, as expressed in the notion of *sasaipuk*. *Saspinal* should behave in a generous, caring, sociable and helpful way. Good *saspinal* are said to be attentive to ordinary people's needs and always willing to help them in various matters, ranging from giving them a lift to the town, visiting them in the hospital and mediating disputes to assisting in the application for bank loans or government grants. They should be sociable, willing to eat and drink with 'nobody' (someone without any title) from the same bowl or cup without hesitation, and to enjoy mixing with them. Also, they should be generous in using their own money to buy food and drinks for others. Certainly, one of the most common criticisms directed against *saspinal* is that they are selfish and stingy because they seldom use their own money to buy food and drinks for others. Moreover, such stinginess indicates their lack of care and concern for ordinary people. One important way in which the *saspinal* can show their generosity and caring is to donate money in public, usually in a conspicuous fashion, to all sorts of communal

activities. This money is mostly used to buy food and drinks. As mediators between the Bunun and the state, local political leaders should also possess certain abilities, such as fluency in the national language and literacy. Being assertive, articulate, knowledgeable and confident in dealing with higher government officials on important occasions is essential as well.

The term *saspinal* literally means 'strong and powerful protector' or 'someone to rely on'. From previous studies of the Bunun, we can propose two interpretations of how it came to be used to refer to political leaders and government officials. One is that *saspinal* was established under the threat of headhunting and the need to organize defense strategies and tribal warfare more efficiently.<sup>16</sup> Under such conditions, several settlements would form a 'tribe' and a *saspinal* was elected by the tribal committee, composed of clan elders. Men from the precedent patrilineal clan in the tribe had more advantage in gaining support and being elected. However, personal ability and experience was also essential. A *saspinal* was the guardian of customary laws and was responsible for calling and chairing tribal meetings. The decisions of the tribal meetings were executed under the supervision of *saspinal*. *Lavi-an* (military leader) and a group of *mamangan* (warriors or brave men) were responsible for warfare, defense and the training of young men (Ma, 1985: 39–44). While a *saspinal* was still physically strong, he also led in headhunting as *lavi-an*. When he became old, another strong man was elected as *lavi-an* (Chiu, 1966: 156). After the threat of headhunting warfare had diminished, the 'tribe' system would dissolve and each settlement regained its independence and autonomy. Traditional *saspinal* demonstrated the characteristics of a Southeast Asian 'man of prowess', as discussed by Wolters (1999), in so far as he attracted followers through his personal ability and achievement, rather than through institutional support.<sup>17</sup> The other interpretation links the emergence of *saspinal* to the advance of colonialism in Taiwan. Sayama (1988[1919]: 51) mentioned that the Bunun had no official position for a settlement leader, and that things were decided by the elders of patrilineal clans. Under Ch'ing China, every Bunun settlement established a leader called *saspinal*, who was responsible for internal and foreign affairs. Huang (1998: 133) thought *saspinal* only appeared under Japanese colonial rule. The Japanese appointed the traditional military leader *lavi-an* as 'Tomuk' (chief) for the purpose of indirect rule, and the Bunun called an appointed chief *saspinal*. Compared with traditional *lavi-an* and ritual leader *lisgadan lus-an*, the *saspinal* was more powerful because of the support of the colonial government.

Both interpretations point to the connection between the establishment of political leadership and external threats. I think the former better explains the emergence of *saspinal* as a 'strong and powerful protector', while the latter shows how the role of *saspinal* was transformed under the

advance of the colonial state. From being political leaders who were responsible for mediating in internal disputes and foreign relations, such as warfare and peace covenants, *saspinal* have transformed into government officials whose power comes not only from internal support but also from the state.

The abolition of headhunting and the top-down intervention in Bunun political leadership by the state brought about certain shifts in the role of *saspinal*. However, there are also some continuities with the past. Today, *saspinal* are still subject to similar moral evaluations by the Bunun. As in the times of headhunting and tribal warfare, *saspinal* should have courage, valor and confidence in dealing with the outside world. When it comes to their relationship with ordinary Bunun, they should demonstrate love, care, compassion and protection toward them. It is emphasized that without the latter a *saspinal* is not truly strong and powerful. Although the official position provided by the state has a certain authority, a *saspinal* is not really influential without the support of other people. Moreover, if a *saspinal* is regarded as trying to impose himself upon others, he may place himself in danger of a witchcraft attack.<sup>18</sup>

Up to this point, I have discussed some aspects of the relationship between the state and the Bunun of Vulvul and Ququaz. I have tried to highlight the importance of the culturally specific ways in which the Bunun conceive and imagine the state. Through their own idiom of kinship and power, the Bunun have tried to transform the state, initially an external and imposed authority, into a caring provider that they can negotiate with, and make demands on. The state has also drawn on a similar, but not identical, kinship idiom to incorporate the Bunun, pitiful children in the infancy of civilization, into its rule. As a result, there is a dialectical integration between the two. Despite their marginality, one cannot describe the present-day Bunun as 'both outside and subject to state power' (Tsing, 1993: 26). The people of Vulvul and Ququaz cannot be, and no longer want to be, outside state power; instead they are forging a moral discourse of the state that holds it accountable in terms of the delivery of material and social goods.<sup>19</sup> In the following, I will demonstrate further how these ideas about the state and government officials are put into action through the discussion of a particular activity.

### **Compliance, *saspinal* and mediating the relationship with the state**

Early one August morning in 1997, Tama Dahu, the leader of the Bunun Traditional Music Troupe, reminded the people of Vulvul over the loud-speaker to gather in front of his house at noon. They were going to Sulai-an to perform songs and dances for visiting government officials. As it was

the high season for cash crops, people still went to work in the vegetable gardens. At noon, they rushed back from work and got ready quickly. At 1.10pm we arrived at the Processing Center for Agricultural Products of Haitung township at Sulai-an, where the annual inspection of the Social Development Project for Aborigines was going to be held. The center, a new building with a large concrete front yard and fences, was decorated with colorful flags, banners and sculptures. Most of the officials from the Haitung township office and all the village heads were already there. They had been preparing for the presentation since early morning. Everyone was serious and nervous.

This annual inspection was also a competition, and marks would be given by a team of officials from the central government. The top three from all the aboriginal townships would be awarded substantial prize money. The first prize was NT\$1.2 million, the second prize 1 million, and the third prize 0.8 million. More significantly, all local officials thought this was an important opportunity to impress the central government, so that Haitung would find favor in terms of the distribution of government funding and subsidy in the future.

The people of Vulvul changed their clothes by a ditch. Women put traditional costumes on top of the clothes they were wearing, and painted their faces with make-up. Some complained about the awfully hot weather, and enviously watched the men, who were wearing traditional short black skirts. When they were ready, the Vulvul village head instructed them to gather under the tent of the 'traditional carving class', where some wooden carvings were displayed. In the other tents 'traditional weaving', agricultural specialties and a television showing a video of festivals and rituals were displayed.

We waited for the visiting officials for about an hour. When they finally arrived at 2.20pm, local officials asked the people of Vulvul to stand in two rows, with women in the front, and to welcome the guests with applause. Without paying much attention to the ordinary Bunun, the guests went directly into the building where the presentation would be held. The meeting room was carefully decorated with posters promoting development projects. Every official received two pamphlets, one introducing the program for the afternoon, and the other explaining the implementation of the Social Development Project locally.

I looked at the implementation pamphlet with great interest. I was struck by how much money the Haitung township had spent on economic development in the last year alone: more than NT\$100 million! This was in sharp contrast to the amount spent on 'cultural projects': less than a million. Although the decoration and exhibition of the entire space focused on displaying Bunun 'traditional culture' and reflected some changes in government policy regarding aboriginal people (from assimilation to

multiculturalism after the abolition of martial law in 1987), the very purpose of the Social Development Project was still 'to improve the relatively backward living conditions of aboriginal people' and 'to bring progress to aboriginal societies' (Haitung Township Office, 1997: 6).

After the presentation, the visitors moved to the tents outside to watch Bunun singing and dancing performed by the people of Vulvul. They were treated to local specialties, such as rice cakes (*muci*), rice wine, passion fruit, pickled prunes and prune juice. It was not Tama Dahu but an articulate young Bunun official, Haisul, who introduced the meaning of each song to the visitors through a microphone. Haisul modified the meaning of what the people of Vulvul were actually singing to suit the changing political situation brought about by government policies so as to please the visitors. For example, when the men of Vulvul were chanting *malastapan*<sup>20</sup> about their ancestors' valor in fighting the Japanese and their own bravery in hunting, he added a few things such as 'we fought the communist bandits for the country in the August 23rd War' and 'now the government has banned hunting so we plant green pepper'.

On the whole, the performance did not attract much attention from the visiting officials, who were very busy eating, and who occasionally clapped their hands before the people of Vulvul actually finished singing a song, which I found very offensive. The performance lasted about an hour. After this was over, the guests set off to inspect development projects in another village, with their car loaded with rice cakes, cabbages, passion fruit, pickled prunes and other local specialties. None of the people of Vulvul got to taste these things.

After the performance, the people of Vulvul went back home with one pig and two boxes of alcohol (40 bottles) which was given to them by the local government as a reward for their cooperation and help. The pig was slaughtered in front of *Tomuk* Tama Mui's house, as the activity today was defined as a 'cultural' one. A Bunun official, Anu, came as the representative of the township office, and gave a short speech to thank the people of Vulvul. The meat was distributed equally among those who participated in the day's performance, but four shares were set aside for Anu to take away for himself and other officials. The entrails and some meat were cooked immediately so that everyone present, including those who had just come back from their agricultural work, could share and drink together. Tama Mui's wife, *Cina* Niun,<sup>21</sup> told me that she was starving because they had been in such a hurry that noon to go to Sulai-an after working in the cabbage garden that they hadn't had much time to eat lunch. She commented: 'We people of Vulvul are very compliant and cooperative. The government called us and we rushed down [the mountain] immediately'.

During the day's events, the people of Vulvul actually had very little direct interaction with the visiting officials. Local Bunun officials acted as

mediators between them and the visiting *saspinal*, and interpreters of Bunun 'traditional culture'. The performance of traditional singing and dancing was part of the attempt to please and impress central government officials, along with the provision of all kinds of food and local specialties. The guests were also treated to two restaurant feasts, one at lunchtime and another in the evening. The purpose of all this effort was to create better opportunities for tapping more money and resources from the state.

The people of Vulvul were impressed by the work of Haitung local government, and were satisfied that local *saspinal* had shown their care and appreciation for them by providing them with the pig and the drinks. Some young people who didn't go to Sulai-an but stayed to finish their work in the vegetable gardens were curious about the afternoon's activity, as they joined the pig feast. When they learnt that none of the ordinary villagers had been able to share the home-made rice cakes because they had all been taken home by the visiting *saspinal*, they began to criticize these officials as greedy and neglectful. As a young woman, Moidal, said:

These *saspinal*! It is not enough for them just to eat here, they also want to pack and bring food home. Ha! The Han-Chinese criticize us aboriginal people and say we're dirty, but they eat our food more than we do every time. The *muci* and other things which were given to them by the township office, I wonder whether it is a kind of 'bribe'?

The notion of bribery has only developed recently. At the moment, there is no specific term in the Bunun language which means bribery, and it is usually referred to using the Mandarin word *hue-luo*. When my adoptive father suggested I host a feast for the head of the Household Registration Office, as mentioned above, he did not think it was a form of bribery. Rather, it was a means ordinary people could use to make things easier for themselves. To eat and to drink with the officials can help create a suitable context in which to make requests and negotiate what is hopefully a long-term, amicable relationship. As I will show below, the pigs, food and drinks provided by candidates in elections are not considered as bribery either. Rather, feeding and sharing are seen as the right means of constructing a social relationship.

The way in which the visiting *saspinal* packed rice cakes and other food into their cars, instead of asking the people of Vulvul to share with them, demonstrates their lack of care and love. They failed to meet the Bunun expectations of how *saspinal* should behave, and were therefore criticized. In this activity, the Bunun ideal that those who have greater power should protect and show compassion and love to the weaker ones is fulfilled only among the Bunun themselves, between local Bunun officials and the people of Vulvul. This ideal is not realized where the visiting Han-Chinese officials from the central government are concerned. The notion of bribery points

to the limitations of their attempt to transform the power discrepancy between themselves, government officials and the state into reciprocal moral commitment. Such attempts and difficulties also manifest in the specific ways in which elections – the very institution by which *saspinal* are produced in the contemporary context – are conceived and organized among the Bunun.

### Elections: rituals of unity and division

The first thing I learned about elections among the Bunun is that a single candidate for a single office is regarded as good (*masial*), if not the best. This seems to be at odds with the very purpose of electoral politics itself, that is, free choice. As pointed out by Comaroff and Comaroff (1997: 125), democracy in the West has a hegemonic, indeed even ontological, association with freedom and self-expression with choice. However, the Bunun term for election and voting is *mansupaz*, which literally means stamping and indicates nothing to do with choice. Moreover, the chance to choose from several candidates presents a dilemma for the people of Vulvul and Ququaz. As election to them is less to do with political views but more about social relations, choice all too often means conflicts, division, competing loyalties and difficult decisions. Who are you going to vote for during local elections: a member of your patrilineal clan or your affine, your good friend, or your next door neighbor? Do you vote for your fellow church member, or for the one who seeks re-election and has more experience in dealing with the state? Thus, a choice of candidates is not pursued by the Bunun. Many of them complain about the difficulties they face in deciding who to vote for when there are several candidates. Some families solve the problem by distributing votes equally to each candidate. Others are so overwhelmed by competing loyalties that they deliberately go hunting or visiting relatives elsewhere in advance to avoid voting.

Despite their dislike of competition in local elections, after the abolition of martial law in 1987, it was usual that more than one person would show an interest in standing for an election several months, or even a year, before it took place. Understandably, it takes great effort to persuade some of them to stand down. As I was frequently told, negotiations before the (Nationalist Party) nomination are more important than the election day itself. This is what decides an election. This is definitely true when only one candidate nominated by the Nationalist Party stands for one seat, which is what the pre-election negotiations aim to achieve.

A wide range of social relations and connections are mobilized in pre-election negotiations, such as kinship, church fellowship,<sup>22</sup> friendship, party membership, neighborhood and so on. Among them kinship is the most

important, as most people in Vulvul and Ququaz still take social obligations toward kin seriously. Requests from affines are particularly hard to turn down, as I was told repeatedly. When my adoptive brother Nihu intended to stand as village head in the election in 1990, another man from Evago also showed interest. A member from my adoptive family's patri-clan, whose sister married into Evago, went to persuade his *mavala* (affines) to stand down and succeeded. The compelling quality of the *mavala*'s request is to do with the fact that affinal relationships are considered harder to mend when they are damaged. It is also related to the possible harm it may bring – misfortunes and bad death – when the taboos (*samu*) against disrespect between affines are broken. The Bunun also think that children's health relies significantly on protection from the members of their mother's patrilineal clan (*tankanai-an*), whose blessings or curses are considered to be the most powerful and effective (Mabuchi, 1986).

Although the Bunun place much emphasis on consensus while electing *saspinal*, a process they call *mapintasa* ('becoming one' [voice or opinion]), it is very difficult to make a unanimous decision when they no longer live in small clusters of large extended families. These pre-election negotiations do sometimes fail, and more than one person might insist on standing for one office. The Nationalist Party will assess the ability and popularity of each person and decide to nominate one candidate, or not to nominate anyone and to 'open' the election to competition. In local elections (at village and township level), there is a strong sense that the person who gets nominated will eventually win the election.

Elections cost a lot when there is more than one candidate. This is another reason why the Bunun prefer a one-candidate-one-seat situation. It is clear to them that when candidates spend a lot of money on their campaign, they will try to earn it back through the mismanagement of government funding or by receiving bribery from construction contractors after they have been elected. There is a widespread suspicion among the Bunun that *saspinal* eat money (*mon sui*). When *saspinal* are preoccupied with getting back the campaigning costs they have spent, they easily become selfish and greedy, and neglect their responsibility and obligation toward those who voted for them. When this happens, it is the ordinary people who have to suffer the consequences.

Even when there is just one candidate, elections do not proceed quietly. Various formal meetings and electoral rallies are held to ensure good support, or a 'good performance', in the words of some Nationalist Party workers. However, these meetings and electoral rallies are considered dull occasions, and what happens in the feasts afterward is much more important and exciting. As the head of the Haitung Nationalist Party office told me: 'Meetings are not important. What is important is that after the meetings we send the women home and drink together'. Social networks

are more effectively mobilized and decisions are usually made in these drinking sessions.

On the election day, every adult in the settlement will turn up to vote. Even those who spend most of their time living in their field huts will come down to the village specifically for the election. The people of Vulvul and Ququaz feel strongly that they must vote because 'if you don't vote it means that you don't love the state'. They always disapprove of my decision to stay in the village and see what happens on election day, rather than to go home to vote and to fulfil my obligation as a citizen. Moreover, to choose deliberately not to vote is regarded as a kind of protest, something they want to avoid. I remember vividly when my adoptive sister-in-law Apas expressed her reluctance to vote during a provincial election, because she had just turned 20 and felt unconfident doing something she had never done before, my adoptive father was adamant that she must vote. As he said to her: 'if you don't want to vote you have to hide in the mountains in advance. Now you are at home and you must vote, otherwise you will be criticized by others as protesting against the state'. So Apas went to the polling station to cast her ballot.

Several times during the election day, the village head repeatedly reminds the villagers of their duty to vote over the loudspeaker. A small group of people, usually men, gather outside the polling station and drink together from the early morning. They greet everyone and drag over those who have come back from the cities just to have a few drinks with them. Several such drinking groups are formed in the village, in the front yards or inside the house, as the election brings migrant workers home. There is a kind of hustle and bustle in the village. The festive atmosphere reaches its peak in the evening, when the 'election pig' provided by the elected candidate is slaughtered and distributed.

It must be stressed that the food, cigarettes, betel nuts and drinks provided by the candidates at their campaign offices and distributed by their assistants when they tour around the villages are not in any way considered to be a form of bribery. They are just part of the everyday give-and-take which is intensified during the election, and an indication of the candidate's generosity. Nor is the pig promised by the candidate beforehand and distributed after the election a form of bribery. The election pig is distributed and a feast held in the manner of *mapinaskal*, a traditional Bunun way of expressing thanks, love and blessings. It creates a mutual moral commitment between the *saspinal* and his followers, a reciprocal relationship, in which, in *Cina Malas*' words, '*saspinal* help and take care of us, and we respect and support him'.

An election can be an occasion for consolidating social relations and community sentiments. Much emphasis is placed on unity, especially in Ququaz where people are intensely aware of their own marginality.

However, when there are several candidates and the competition heats up, a lot of tensions, divisions and conflicts can break out as well. Even when the candidates from Vulvul and Ququaz are elected, people look closely at how many votes 'escape' or 'run away', and how many people do not vote for their candidate. When the number is small and insignificant, the people of Vulvul and Ququaz explain it away by concluding that it must be due to a few drunks or illiterate old people who don't know how to vote properly. However, when there are too many 'escape votes', which indicates a plot against their own candidate is afoot, accusations and blame are expressed in public, and this occasionally results in fighting. Those who are suspected are labeled as traitors. Also, the offenders are accused of taking bribes, in the form of money, from the candidates of other villages.

That money is counted as bribery, and food, pigs and drinks are not, is an extremely important distinction. Whereas the former is inimical to the unity of the social group by tempting its members to betrayal, the latter strengthens kinship and other social relations. In fact, the food, pigs, cigarettes, betel nuts and drinks provided by the candidate during the elections are bought from the market with cash. So why do the people of Vulvul and Ququaz maintain such a strong distinction between the two? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand the symbolism of money.

### **The symbolism of money and the changing political imagination**

For the Bunun, money means different things in different contexts. First of all, it is seen as an agent of change and a prime symbol of commodity exchange. I often heard the Bunun lament the loss of the good old days, when they were self-sufficient and did not rely on money and the market. They grew enough food and the wild animals were abundant. They were happy because they did not have to worry about money. These good old days are gone, since now the Bunun must pay for everything, and often find themselves struggling with a shortage of cash. The market recognizes only money and not persons; when you have no money you are nobody. In this sense, money represents the impersonal nature of commodity exchange.

The introduction of money does not only lead to the disappearance of self-sufficiency, it is also regarded as a major reason for the division and segmentation of big extended families. When it is not properly shared and some family members act selfishly to hide their earnings from others, arguments follow. Money erodes social unity because it encourages the development of self-interest, calculation and conflict. The impersonal character of money and the threat it poses to social unity make it a pertinent symbol for short-term individualistic relations.

However, for the Bunun, what is wrong is not money per se, but how it

is used. Money is not intrinsically divisive. In fact, it is often incorporated into the domain of kinship and social relations in a way that is highly desirable and constructive. In life-cycle rituals marking birth, marriage and death, money is contributed as a gift, which is carefully noted down in a book. It can be a substitute for pigs, food, clothes, cooking pots and machetes, or be transformed into these things in life-cycle rituals without causing any problem. On these occasions, money is a sign of mutual assistance, love and blessings between kin, friends and neighbors. Money as such also commonly appears in day-to-day social interactions. Parents and grandparents regularly give money to their children and grandchildren to buy candies and snacks. *Maladaigaz* (members of mother's patrilineal clan) show their love to the children of their out-married women in another village by giving them money when they bump into each other in the town. When properly contained in the domain of kinship relations, money is morally valued because it facilitates the reproduction of long-term reciprocal commitment and social order (Carsten, 1989; Toren, 1989).

As Parry and Bloch (1989) have pointed out, the symbolism and moral evaluations of money are closely linked with the articulation between the long-term reproduction of social order, and short-term individualistic cycles. The Bunun distinction between money as bribery, and pigs, food and drinks as not, is an attempt to keep these two cycles apart so that the long-term moral commitment is not threatened by the short-term utilitarian relation. Moreover, this is part of the political imagination that seeks to define their relationship with *saspinal* and the state as one of long-term moral relation, and to transform the power of the state from a potentially and historically dangerous foreign force into something positive and benevolent to their community and social well-being.

However, as I have shown above, their attempt to transform the power discrepancy between themselves, government officials and the state into a long-term reciprocal moral relationship is not always successful. At the same time, in reality, the status of money is more ambiguous and shifting. The Bunun distinction between money, and pigs and other goods, has also been challenged by the political changes in the post-martial law era, and as well by the mainstream debate about elections in the mass media, in which the provision of pigs and goods are criticized as bribery. Recently, some young people have started to question whether the food they give to the government officials does in fact constitute bribery, as the visiting officials act in an immoral way. The recognition of the immorality of government officials in various contexts has led some people to think that their support, compliance and cooperation is in vain, and that their relationship with government officials and the state is short-term and individualistic. To take bribes in elections is the best they can get out of such a relationship.

In his discussion of ‘retail’ corruption – low-level routine corruption of everyday experience – in India, Parry (2000) argues that the widespread condemnation of corruption is testimony to the general public’s internalization of the universalistic and impersonal values associated with modern bureaucracy. Perhaps the development of the notion of bribery among the Bunun is also heading towards this direction. However, at present, most people of Vulvul and Ququaz still try to establish a long-term moral relationship with government officials and the state. Therefore, they decry those who accept bribery and turn away from their social obligations. In Ququaz, people worry about whether their village will become like the Qalavang villages, which are full of conflicts and have very little social unity, and where people are individualistic and selfish. Such a situation is regarded by the Bunun as very sad. In their view, the Bunun village of Qatu has already become like that. It is a place where not even Bunun candidates can gain support by fulfilling their social obligations; rather, they must bribe constituents to get votes. Moreover, you can never trust the people of Qatu, for they will accept bribery but still feel no obligation to vote for the candidate who has given them the money.

Interestingly, the people of Qatu are also described as protest-lovers because they are not bound by a long-term moral relationship with the state. In the eyes of the people of Ququaz, the people of Qatu are less Bunun and are ‘becoming Qalavang’. Given the conflicts, division and disintegration in these villages that the people of Ququaz have witnessed, resistance, far from being the weapon of the weak (Scott, 1985, 1990), is seen as a weapon that can work against the weak.

### **Compliance with a ‘personalized’ state**

In this article, the state is not treated as a fixed object or a coherent and unified entity, but as a historical and contingent construction. To see the state as ‘imaginary’ is not to mistake it as an entity with a life of its own, distinct from both the rulers and the ruled, but rather to examine how it has been conceptualized and made socially effective through particular symbolic devices and cultural practices. Therefore, how the Bunun encounter and perceive the state is examined in this article, with emphasis placed on the fact that Bunun images of the state as *sasaipuk* and the government officials as *saspinal* are rooted in their culture and colonial experiences. As pointed out by Gupta (1995) and Das and Poole (2004a), at both the margins of the polity and at the local level, encounters with the state are often experienced in an intimate way, whereby power is embodied in local officials. These interactions with local bureaucracies mediate the state’s abstract existence, and encourage the Bunun to construct a

personalized notion of the state. Through their idioms of kinship and political leadership, the Bunun try to incorporate and transform the power of the state from an external and potentially dangerous force into something positive and benevolent for themselves. The attempt to establish a long-term moral relationship with the government and officials via a kinship idiom has created a form of dialectical integration between the Bunun and the state. Consequently, the Bunun are very reluctant to confront the state directly by means of protest.

The Bunun are not unique in their formation of a personalized notion of the state. From other examples, it can be seen that the Chambri of New Guinea negotiate with the state based on the model of a trading partnership, and find it very difficult to accept the state's claim to a higher authority which represents public interests (Gewertz and Errington, 1991). As well, in other parts of New Guinea, the Huli follow the traditional political model of a big man, and perceive the state as a white man, whereby it can be not only generous and protective like a big man, but also dangerous and perhaps even evil, in terms of displaying amoral behavior or the failure to reciprocate (Clark, 1997). From their experience of war and development, the Meratus Dayaks of Indonesia narrate stories of government headhunters, in which the state's claim to the legitimate use of force becomes mere violence, and hence its power is contested (Tsing, 1993, 1996).

These studies stress that when the ruled understand the state within the conception of their traditional culture they often deconstruct official ideologies and demonstrate an agency. This also reflects a strong tendency in anthropology to highlight aspects of resistance where the relationship between the people studied and the state is concerned (e.g. Hale, 1994; Kapferer, 1995). However, when the Bunun use their idioms of kinship and political leadership to understand and construct their relationship with the state, they place strong emphasis on negotiation, rather than on resistance. Moreover, they attempt to develop an intimate, convivial relationship with government officials through compliance and cooperation, in order to transform the power discrepancy between themselves and the state. This seems to support Mbembe's argument that the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance, but rather can best be characterized as a convivial relationship (Mbembe, 2001). However, Mbembe regards the production of conviviality and intimacy as an indication that state power has created, through administrative and bureaucratic practices, its own world of meanings which are then internalized by its subjects, and fails to consider the possibility that conviviality itself could have been an important cultural concept, singled out and emphasized by the ruled before they were incorporated into the state.

The Bunun case shows that compliance, instead of being a kind of passive accommodation, can be 'quite effective agency' (Ortner, 1997: 148). The

Bunun's self-professed compliance is an active deconstruction of the infantilizing kinship representation used by higher state officials in their dealings with the Bunun, turning the kinship mode on its ear to reflect and actualize their own expectations of nurturance, generosity and autonomy. This presents a challenge to the still prevalent anthropological preference to see deconstruction of any sort as a form of resistance. Since the 1980s, anthropologists have earnestly tried to recover the subjectivity, experience and agency of those who are at the periphery of power, through the discussion of resistance. Resistance has achieved a canonical status, to such an extent that it is described by Brown (1996: 729) as 'theoretical hegemony' today. The moral fervor the rhetoric of resistance projects has made it particularly appealing to social scientists after the postmodern turn (Brown, 1996: 729–30). Although resistance studies have risked problems of romanticization, ethnographic thinness and vagueness in the over-expansion of what constitutes resistance and, as well, have overlooked the phenomena of public participation in reproducing systems of power as pointed out by many scholars (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Brown, 1996; Cooper, 1994; Das and Poole, 2004b; Kaplan and Kelly, 1994; Mitchell, 1990; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; O'Hanlon, 1988; Ortner, 1995), it is still a very dominant theoretical theme within current anthropological discourse. This preoccupation with resistance has prevented anthropologists from a more nuanced analysis, as it is implied that the subjectivity and agency of the ruled can only be found under the rubric of resistance. The Bunun case, once again, exposes the oversimplified character of such a theoretical assumption, and suggests that a choice between power and resistance does not have to be made, but rather that a serious look should be taken at the way different cultures, at different historical moments, have constructed their own forms of agency.

### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork among the Bunun on which this article is based was funded by a MA thesis studentship (1991–2) from the Institute of Ethnology, and a PhD candidate fellowship (1997–9) from Academia Sinica. I would like to express my deeply felt gratitude to my supervisors Ying-Kuei Huang, Maurice Bloch and Rita Astuti for their inspiration and support. Previous versions of this article were presented at the School of Oriental and African Studies (UK), the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica (Taiwan), and the Institute of Anthropology, National Tsing Hua University (Taiwan). I am grateful to participants, especially Stephan Feuchtwang, Ying-Kuei Huang, Kai-Shyh Lin and James Wilkerson, for their instructive comments and helpful suggestions. I also wish to thank three anonymous reviewers of *Ethnography* for their critical commentaries. My largest debt is to the residents of Vulvul and Ququaz who opened their lives to me.

## Notes

- 1 In a recent article, Asad (2004: 281–2) criticizes the usage of the word fetish in some critical literature on the state to suggest that because the state has an abstract character, it is merely an ideological construction and its claim to power is therefore empty.
- 2 Bartelson (2001) also remarks that statism has become a salient feature of modern political discourse.
- 3 However, I do not mean to replace a top-down approach with a purely bottom-up approach. What I suggest is that we should pay more attention to how the cultural imagination and practice of ordinary people shape the state.
- 4 Das and Poole (2004b: 4) also note that for reasons having to do with its historical origins as the study of ‘primitive peoples’, anthropology has traditionally not acknowledged the state as a proper subject for ethnographic inspection.
- 5 For example, Trouillot (2001: 131) regards the state effects as grounds for an ethnography of the state.
- 6 Before the Japanese colonization, the Bunun lived in small clusters of large extended families and practiced shifting cultivation and hunting.
- 7 The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) took over Taiwan in 1945, after the Japanese were defeated at the end of the Second World War. Later, in 1949, the Nationalist Party lost their power struggle to the Communist Party and retreated to Taiwan, bringing with them a new wave of Han-Chinese immigration. These newcomers are referred to as Mainlanders by those Han-Chinese who migrated to Taiwan before Japanese colonization and consider themselves authentically Taiwanese.
- 8 Tama means father or uncle in Bunun.
- 9 Cattle were introduced to Ququaz together with wet-rice cultivation by the Japanese, therefore they provide an appropriate metaphor for expressing hierarchical relationship with the colonizers.
- 10 Administratively, Vulvul belongs to Haitung township, and Ququaz belongs to Ren-ai township.
- 11 The political participation of Mainlanders and Taiwanese was highly unequal (Wakabayashi, 1989). Although the Mainlanders make up only a small proportion of Taiwan’s population, they dominated Taiwan’s government before the fall of the Nationalist Party in the presidential election of 2000.
- 12 See Stafford (2000) for a nice discussion of the debt children owe to parents for their provision, and the obligation to reciprocate in Chinese kinship.
- 13 Although the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lost control of the central government after losing the presidential election of 2000 to the Democratic Progress Party (DPP), its dominance in aboriginal areas remains largely

intact, especially among the Bunun who demonstrate a clear preference for negotiation and communication over radical political action. Up until now, the DPP has made almost no inroads into Bunun villages. Moreover, leaders of the DPP are often seen by the Bunun as trouble-makers and destroyers of social order.

- 14 A similar case can be found in the Pintupi, an Australian aboriginal people studied by Myers (1986). In developing their relationship with the state, the Pintupi use their cultural notion of hierarchy as nurturance to oblige the state to help and take care of them, without perceiving their autonomy to be diminished.
- 15 However, school teachers and health workers are not *saspinal* even though they are also employed by the state.
- 16 Before the advance of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, the Bunun had engaged with other indigenous groups in headhunting warfare, especially when they migrated into a new area.
- 17 *Saspinal* also fits nicely into the model of 'exemplary personhood' or 'exemplary center' which features significantly in Southeast Asia, as discussed by Anderson (1972) and Errington (1989).
- 18 In Ququaz, I was told such a story by Nasin. Nasin became the village head in 1986, when he was only 29 years old. Young and energetic, he was eager to put his new ideas into practice and to create a stronger sense of honor and unity in the village. He spoke to the villagers and issued instructions over the loudspeaker every week, and did not hesitate to rebuke certain kinds of behaviour, such as gambling, public drunkenness or quarrels between co-villagers. He was popular among many villagers but some were resentful of his assertiveness and rebuke. Two years into his term of office, one day his knees suddenly gave way and he experienced incredible pain when he was preparing the villagers for a dancing performance that would soon be held in the township. He went to the hospital in Puli and his condition was diagnosed as gout. However, he knew he had been attacked by witchcraft (*matimva*) due to the suddenness and seriousness of his condition. At its worst, he could hardly walk, even though he had been to the hospital in Taipei and received better treatment. He went to consult several spirit mediums in other Bunun villages, and they confirmed that he had been attacked by witchcraft and treated him. Fortunately, although the process was slow, he made a good recovery. When his term of office came to an end after four years, although many people urged him to stand for another term, he decided not to.
- 19 In this aspect, it can be compared with the caring society model in some Southeast Asian states discussed by Ong (1999).
- 20 *Malastapan* means 'telling bravery deeds' (in headhunting).
- 21 *Cina* means mother or aunt in Bunun.
- 22 The Bunun are predominantly Christians after the mass conversion in the

1960s. Both Vulvul and Ququaz have two churches: the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church (Yang, 2005).

## References

- Abrams, P. (1988) 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1(1): 58–89.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1990) 'The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women', *American Ethnologist* 17(1): 41–55.
- Alonso, A.M. (1994) 'The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23: 379–405.
- Anderson, B. (1972) 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture', in C. Holt, B. Anderson and J. Siegel (eds) *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 1–69. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Aretxaga, B. (2003) 'Maddening States', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 393–410.
- Asad, T. (2004) 'Where Are the Margins of the State?', in V. Das and D. Poole (eds) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, pp. 279–88. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series.
- Asano, Y. (1988[1933]) *Dakuanshan fanhai shijen (Dakuanshan Event, I-VI)*. Translated by Yu Wangi. Unpublished translation manuscript. Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica.
- Bartelson, J. (2001) *The Critique of the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1999) 'Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field', in G. Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, pp. 51–75. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Brown, M.F. (1996) 'On Resisting Resistance', *American Anthropologist* 98(4): 725–35.
- Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs (1911) *Report on the Control of the Aborigines in Formosa*. Taihoku, Formosa: Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs.
- Burghart, R. (1996) 'The Condition of Listening: The Everyday Experience of Politics in Nepal', in C.J. Fuller and J. Spencer (eds) *The Condition of Listening: Essays on Religion, History and Politics in South Asia*, pp. 300–18. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Carsten, J. (1989) 'Cooking Money: Gender and the Symbolic Transformation of Means of Exchange in a Malay Fishing Community', in J. Parry and M. Bloch (eds) *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, pp. 117–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chiu, C.-C. (1966) *Kashechun Bunonzen Te Shehuei Chuchi (The Social Organization of Takebahka Bunun)*. Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica.

- Clark, J. (1997) 'Imaging the State, or Tribalism and the Arts of Memory in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea', in T. Otto and N. Thomas (eds) *Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific*, pp. 65–90. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Comaroff, J.L. (1998) 'Reflections on the Colonial State, in South Africa and Elsewhere: Factions, Fragments, Facts and Fiction', *Social Identities* 4(3): 321–61.
- Comaroff, J.L. and J. Comaroff (1997) 'Postcolonial Politics and Discourses of Democracy in Southern Africa: An Anthropological Reflection on African Political Modernities', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 53(2): 123–46.
- Comaroff, J. and J.L. Comaroff (2000) 'Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming', *Public Culture* 12(2): 291–343.
- Cooper, F. (1994) 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', *American Historical Review* 99(5): 1516–45.
- Coronil, F. (1997) *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Corrigan, P. and D. Sayer (1985) *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Das, V. and D. Poole (eds) (2004a) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series.
- Das, V. and D. Poole (2004b) 'State and Its Margins: Comparative Ethnography', in V. Das and D. Poole (eds) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, pp. 3–33. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series.
- Errington, S. (1989) *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ferguson, J. and A. Gupta (2002) 'Spatializing States: Toward an Anthropology of Neoliberal Governmentality', *American Ethnologist* 29(4): 981–1002.
- Foster, R.J. (2002) *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption, and the Media in Papua New Guinea*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Foucault, M. (1982) 'Afterword: The Subject and Power', in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (eds) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, pp. 208–26. Chicago, IL: University Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1991) 'Governmentality', in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, pp. 87–104. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Fuller, C. and V. Benei (eds) (2000) *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Fuller, C.J. and J. Harriss (2000) 'For an Anthropology of the Modern Indian

- State', in C.J. Fuller and V. Benei (eds) *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*, pp. 1–30. Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Gewertz, D.B. and F.K. Errington (1991) *Twisted Histories, Altered Contexts: Representing the Chambri in a World System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (eds and trans). New York: International Publishers.
- Gupta, A. (1995) 'Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State', *American Ethnologist* 22(2): 375–402.
- Gupta, A. (2005) 'Narratives of Corruption: Anthropological and Fictional Accounts of the Indian State', *Ethnography* 6(1): 5–34.
- Haitung Township Office (1997) *Yuanchumin shebei fachan jihua chuxin baugau (Report on the Execution of the Aboriginal Social Development Project)*.
- Hale, C.R. (1994) *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894–1987*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hansen, T.B. and F. Stepputat (eds) (2001a) *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hansen, T.B. and F. Stepputat (2001b) 'Introduction: States of Imagination', in T.B. Hansen and F. Stepputat (eds) *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Huang Y.-K. (1998) "'Chengchi" yu wenhua: Tonpushe bunonzen te litse' ("Politics" and Culture: The Case of the Bunun of Taketonpu)', *Taiwanese Political Science Review* 3: 115–91.
- Kapferer, B. (1995) 'Bureaucratic Erasure: Identity, Resistance and Violence – Aborigines and a Discourse of Autonomy in a North Queensland Town', in D. Miller (ed.) *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*, pp. 69–90. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kaplan, M. and J.D. Kelly (1994) 'Rethinking Resistance: Dialogics of "Disaffection" in Colonial Fiji', *American Ethnologist* 21(1): 123–51.
- Lin, T.-F. (1998) *Zechi shichi nantou dichu bunonchu te jituan ichu (The Collective Resettlement of the Bunun in Nantou Area Under the Japanese Rule)*. MA Thesis, Department of History, National Cheng-kon University.
- Ma, I.-S. (1985) *Ige bunonchu shechi chungli jiego tsi yenjio (A Study of the Power Structure of a Bunun Community)*. MA Thesis, Department of Ethnic Groups and Overseas Chinese Study, University of Chinese Culture.
- Mabuchi, T. (1986) 'Bunonchu chinshu tsenwen te Omaha lexin chushe' ('A Trend toward the Omaha Type in the Bunun Kinship Terminology'), in Y.-K. Huang (ed.) *Taiwan tuchu shebei wenhua lunwenji (Research Essays on the Socio-cultural Systems of Taiwanese Aborigines)*, pp. 625–50. Taipei: Linking Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Mabuchi, T. (1987[1974]) 'Bunonchu te shozo fenpei han chenyu' ('Distribution and Prestation of Meat among the Bunun'), in *Mayuan tonyi chutsoji*

- (*Collected Essays of Mabuchi Toichi*) Vol. 1. Translation manuscript. Yu Wangi (trans). Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica.
- Marx, K. (1967) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1. New York: International Publishers.
- Mbembe, A. (2001) *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mitchell, T. (1990) 'Everyday Metaphors of Power', *Theory and Society* 19(5): 545–78.
- Mitchell, T. (1991a) 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics', *American Political Science Review* 85(1): 77–96.
- Mitchell, T. (1991b) *Colonizing Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mitchell, T. (1999) 'Society, Economy, and the State Effect', in G. Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, pp. 76–97. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Myers, F. (1986) *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nagengast, C. (1994) 'Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23: 109–36.
- Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2002) *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- O'Hanlon, R. (1988) 'Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 22(1): 189–224.
- Ong, A. (1999) 'Clash of Civilizations or Asian Liberalism? An Anthropology of the State Citizenship', in H.L. Moore (ed.) *Anthropological Theory Today*, pp. 48–72. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ortner, S.B. (1995) 'Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37(1): 173–93.
- Ortner, S.B. (1997) 'Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering', *Representations* 59: 135–62.
- Overing, J. and A. Passes (2000) 'Introduction: Conviviality and the Opening Up of Amazonian Anthropology', in J. Overing and A. Passe (eds) *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*, pp. 1–30. London and New York: Routledge.
- Parry, J. (2000) 'The "Crisis of Corruption" and "The Idea of India"', in I. Pardo (ed.) *Morals of Legitimacy: Between Agency and System*, pp. 27–55. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Parry, J. and M. Bloch (1989) 'Introduction', in J. Parry and M. Bloch (eds) *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, pp. 1–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. (1940) 'Preface', in M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (eds) *African Political Systems*, pp. xi–xxii. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rumsey, A. (1999) 'Social Segmentation, Voting, and Violence in Papua New Guinea', *The Contemporary Pacific* 11(2): 305–33.

- Sayama, Y. (1988[1919]) *Banzoku Chosa Hokou-sho Buron-zoku Zenpen (Research Report on the Bunun)*. Taipei: Taiwan Sotokufu.
- Scott, J.C. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. (1990) *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. (1998) *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Stafford, C. (2000) 'Chinese Patriline and the Cycles of *yang* and *laiwa*', in J. Carsten (ed.) *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, pp. 37–54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steinmetz, G. (1999) 'Introduction: Culture and the State', in G. Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, pp. 1–50. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Taussig, M. (1992) 'Maleficium: State Fetishism', in *The Nervous System*, pp. 111–40. London: Routledge.
- Taussig, M. (1997) *The Magic of the State*. London: Routledge.
- Toren, C. (1989) 'Drinking Cash: The Purification of Money through Ceremonial Exchange in Fiji', in J. Parry and M. Bloch (eds) *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, pp. 142–64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trouillot, M.-R. (2001) 'The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization', *Current Anthropology* 42(1): 125–38.
- Tsing, A.L. (1993) *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tsing, A.L. (1996) 'Telling Violence in the Meratus Mountains', in J. Hoskins (ed.) *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in Southeast Asia*, pp. 184–215. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Wakabayashi, M. (1989) *Zhuanxingqil de taiwan (Taiwan in a Transformative Period)*. Ho Yihlin and Chen Tienli (trans.). Taipei: Gu-Shiang Publishing Ltd.
- Wolters, O.W. (1999) *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Yang, S.-Y. (2005) 'Maszan Halinga, Maszan Kamisama' (Same Teaching, Same God): Christianity, Identity and the Construction of Moral Community among the Bunun of Taiwan', paper presented at the International Workshop on Power and Hierarchy: Religious Conversion, Ritual Construction, and Cosmological Belief-Systems in Asia and the Indo-Pacific, 30 May–1 June, Taipei.

■ **SHU-YUAN YANG** is an Assistant Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica. She received her PhD from the Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics. Her research focuses on kinship and the concept of the person, historical memory, the state and cultural politics among the Bunun

of Taiwan. A new research program to study Christianity and modernity among the Ilongot (Bugkalot) of the Philippines will begin in 2006. *Address:* Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Nankang, Taipei 11529, Taiwan.  
[email: [syyang@gate.sinica.edu.tw](mailto:syyang@gate.sinica.edu.tw)] ■