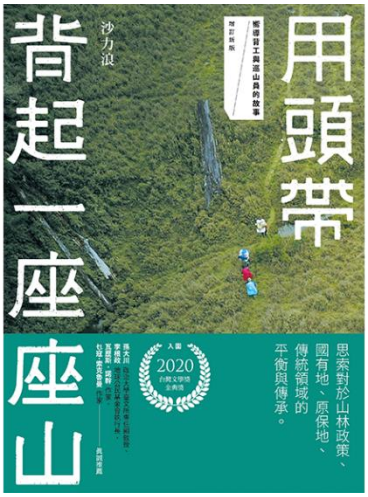
MOVING MOUNTAINS: A TALE OF RANGERS AND PORTERS

用頭帶背起一座座山：嚮導背工與巡山員的故事



The Bunun people, Taiwan's indigenous mountaineers, have wended their way through the mountains of central Taiwan for untold centuries. Bunun poet and scholar Salizan, who has trekked with the rangers for decades, dives deeply into their culture, expertise, and troubled history through the colonial era.

The Bunun people, Taiwan's indigenous mountaineers, have wended their way through the mountains of central Taiwan for untold centuries. For growing numbers of enthusiastic amateur mountaineers, the Bunun are skilled guides and porters who sustain long expeditions in this now-popular pastime. Yet in this book, Bunun poet Salizan takes us deeper into the culture, the accreted wisdom, and the troubled history of his own people over the past century.

A veteran backpacker himself, Salizan presents many of his expeditions as narrative backgrounds for scholarly (and sometimes deeply personal) investigations of Bunun culture, mountaineering expertise, and colonial history. Through his writer's eyes we see the ancient trails dug through the mountains by the Qing armies, the Japanese colonists, and eventually the modern Taiwanese government, while following the actions and reactions of the Bunun rangers and guides who made those projects happen.

As Salizan's backpacking team follows old, sometimes overrun mountain trade routes, they run across emblems of the past – stone houses, changing natural environments, destroyed landmarks, and more – that find themselves alive once more in the accounts of the rangers. The reader, following these material and oral histories like

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stepping across river stones, (re)discovers the Bunun as an adapting population, responding to collaborative and oppressive forces as all civilizations do, while attempting to preserve the expertise that their mountaineering ancestors bequeathed to them.

Salizan Takisvilainan 沙力浪

Bunun poet, scholar, and essayist, who records his tribe and their lands through literature. He has won multiple awards, including the Taiwan Literature Award. In 2005, he founded Millet String Publishing House, which specializes in books written in indigenous languages. He also worked as a mountain ranger.

MOVING MOUNTAINS: A TALE OF RANGERS AND PORTERS

By Salizan Takisvilainan
Translated by Mike Fu

The Story Begins with Head Straps

Our ancestors in the Bunun tribe relied on human strength to convey goods, so they crafted many instruments to bear loads. The *patakan* is a type of L-shaped back bracket made of wood, similar in structure to the aluminum frame backpacks later introduced by mountain climbing companies. We also use the *palagan*, a basket for the back; the *palangan qaibi*, a sealed back basket; the *davaz*, a mesh bag; and the *sivazu*, a mesh bag for women. For the Bunun people, these are all important tools, mostly crafted in twill or hexagonal weaves.

Two accessories are critical to these load-bearing devices: the *vakil* and the *tinaqis*, the shoulder strap and head strap. These two Taiwanese rattan accessories enable two distinctive modes of transport – by the shoulders or by the forehead. To carry by shoulder, goods are placed inside the instrument of transport, which is strapped to both shoulders and rests against the back in transit. The latter mode entails wrapping a strap around the forehead and using the strength of the head for transporting baskets and other load-bearing devices.

We can carry goods by shoulder when they don't weigh too much. We call the act of bearing loads by both shoulders *vakilun*. When the load is a bit heavier, we use a head strap and call this *patinbunguan*, the act of bearing loads by the forehead.

Shoulder straps are often used for trips of short duration, such as carrying crops back from the fields near one's home. Head straps are for heavier items and longer trips, like transporting quarry from the hunt. The head strap allows our clansmen to travel long distances while carrying heavy objects. Since we're talking about porters, who bear heavy loads and make long journeys into the mountains, let's begin our story with the head strap.

In 2000, I traveled from Dongpu to Lamuan on a survey of the Japanese colonial-era Batongguan Traversing Trail. As we left Dafen, the rhythms of *matin lumaq* – "The Song of Carrying Heavy Loads" – slowly rose from the belly of my guide Lin Yuan-Yuan, coalescing in his mouth as a crisp song that trembled, resonated, and reverberated in the valley of Dafen.

He wore a towel wrapped on his head, a strap around his forehead, and plastic rain boots. On his shoulders he carried a mountaineering backpack constructed from a rice sack inside a metal frame. The head strap was the most eye-catching part of this outfit. The tribesmen of yore once carried heavy items with this strap alone. Nowadays, porters use L-shaped aluminum frames along with head straps to lighten the load on their shoulders. The first head straps were woven

from Taiwanese rattan bark. In step with the progress of the times and the accessibility of materials, straps woven from packing belts have gradually become the norm. Every tribe has its own method for weaving, but most work in twill. Worn on the head, the strap looks very much like an ornamental headpiece, and is really quite attractive.

I also wore a strap on my head, which I had gotten from Dina's back basket. Attached to an aluminum frame, this contraption made my journey into the mountains possible. Most of the head straps in the tribe had been made by elder Huang Tai-Shan, whose tribal name was Bisazu. He was the only person left in the tribe who made head straps from Taiwanese rattan, so most of the tribespeople used straps made by Bisazu. Nowadays woven goods are made from packing belts or Taiwanese rattan (*quaz*). He could make them from either of these materials, producing a steady supply of traditional yet practical woven goods.

Head straps are the thing I use most these days. I had to borrow one from Dina whenever I went into the mountains. Eventually I found time to learn how to make them from Bisazu because I was afraid of losing the ones I borrowed. One month of training and I had an exclusive head strap in my possession. Ninety-year-old Tina Umav, who was born in Tarunas on the Lakulaku River, once told me that the people of the Isbabanal clan used to be the only ones who could weave. Other households had to barter with them for woven goods. In her words:

> *naitun maqansia matas-I balangan*、*tuban*、*sivazu*、*davaz*、*at talangqas*、*kaupakaupa tindun qai Isbabanaz a tindun, maqa ata qai mabaliv ata,*
> They were the only ones who knew how to make back baskets, Taiwanese rattan sieves, mesh bags, and *talangqas*. Only the Isbabanaz clan could make these, so other clans bought from them.

This weaving technique was exclusive to the Isbabanaz; for other clans, weaving was forbidden (*samu*). As time went on and clans communicated with one another, many other people, like Bisazu of the Istasipaz clan, came to learn the technique. Fewer and fewer young people study this traditional craft nowadays. Who knows whether this beautiful woven good will still be seen in the mountains in the future?

The head strap is one item that aboriginal guides and porters always bring with them when traveling into the mountains. This woven item lets you identify, among many mountain-dwelling peoples, who the aboriginals are in the crowd. But now more and more flatlanders are learning to use head straps. Using the head strap requires practice, or else one risks injuring the cervical vertebra. The head strap is not placed directly on the forehead, but rather one-third of the way down between the crown of the head and the forehead, and the neck must be a straight line. One cannot look up; the line of sight needs to be on the ground. Head straps can usually be affixed to shoulder straps and, when the load is heavy or the trip is long, help reduce the burden on the shoulders.

If someone suffers injury or debilitating illness – barring neck or spinal injuries – they can also be transported out of the mountains using head straps and trekking poles. Two trekking

poles, one head strap, and a rope can sustain a person of up to 100 kilos. No matter how far the road or how serious the injury, head straps can be used to bring them to safety.

With a strap on his head, Lin Yuan-Yuan brought me to the traditional homeland of the Bunun people. This is where I also heard about rangers for the first time. I learned that a group of people within the Bunun tribe work in their ancestral homeland as porters for outside travelers and for the academic community. In the past decade or more, my relationship with brother Lin Yuan-Yuan has afforded me consistent opportunities to travel into the mountains and get to know the tribespeople who wear straps on their heads. They each have their own roles – as guides, porters, rangers, and so on. Even though their jobs are called different things, they universally involve the deployment of physical strength while working in the ancestral homeland.

But how are the tribespeople's real-life working conditions? And what do outsiders imagine when they think of this vocation? These questions arose from the conversations I had during my visit to the Bunun ancestral home of Mashisan in 2013. It was a beautiful dawn on the second day of my trip, golden light gently spilling onto the bodies ofLin Yuan-Yuan, Kao Chung-Yi (aboriginal name Tiang Tanaouna), and other rangers. As we were preparing our backpacks in front of the Walami Cabin, a tourist asked us where we were going.

"We're heading to Dafen," replied Lin Yuan-Yuan.

"How many days are you going for?" asked the tourist.

"We'll be walking for another ten or so days," Lin laughed. "We're rangers with the national park and need to make our rounds of the mountains."

"How wonderful," said the tourist cheerfully. "You can take in the sights while working, with the mountains and rivers at your side." Most tourists are only able to reach the Walami Cabin. Beyond that lies the ecological reserve of the national park, which requires a permit from the park administration to enter. That we could leisurely go in and work in nature inspired some jealousy, naturally.

Is it really so romantic to work with mountains and forests? This idealized vision of working in nature is not just a contemporary sensibility. Kano Tadao's *Mountains, Clouds, and Barbarians* from the Japanese colonial period describes a scene in which he hears the Bunun tribe's song: "The song rang through the forest and gave rise to an unbelievable echo. Primitive rhythms spilled forth from the mouths of the savages…and penetrated my spirit." Kano was proudest of the time he spent working in the mountains with the Bunun, a period that was also his most productive. He believed that the Bunun's mountain guides, like the samurai, possessed an elegant bearing, valued the bonds of kinship, and carried out their responsibilities to the very end. A whiff of romantic imagination emerges in his literary depictions of the tribe.

His romanticism motivated me to write about the Bunun tribe and the reality of their working environment amid the mountain forests of their traditional territory. This book is based on two journeys into Yushan National Park: the first, a survey of the Qing-era Batongguan Historic Trail, which I'll call the Qing Historic Trail Trip for short, conducted from October 29 to November 9, 2012; the second taken along the Japanese colonial era Batongguan Traversing Trail to the ancestral homeland of Mashisan, from April 19 to April 30, 2013. The articles that follow are

primarily about the Qing Historic Trail, with the Japanese colonial Batongguan Traversing Trail as complement. With rangers and porters as my focus, the stories of these two trips are paired with historical events that detail the working conditions of the tribespeople in the mountains.

Discussion of the head strap has introduced us to this group of people working in nature, and how they move mountains of their own. The head strap is an accessory to back baskets, mesh bags, and back braces, but when one situates this load-bearing device on one's forehead, it allows one to transport a fixed quantity without slipping on the road. It makes heavier loads easier to bear in transit. Let the tribespeople who carry heavy loads by forehead – with the help of back baskets, mesh bags, and back braces – tell the story of the mountains and forests one step at a time. May "The Song of Carrying Heavy Loads" be sung for more people to hear.

Guides with Head Straps

The participants in our itinerary on the eastern route of the Qing dynasty Batongguan Historic Trail included: Lin Yuan-Yuan, Lin Chih-Chung, Chiang Chih-Lung, Kao Chih-Cheng, Wu Chun-Chieh (all of them rangers from the Yushan National Park Headquarters), Lin Hsiu-Shan, Lin Hsiao-Te (the latter two from Jhuosi village, assuming the role of porters), Chao Tsung-Yi (Salizan's Chinese name, the author of this book), Chang Chia-Jung, Huang Chiu-Hao, Lin Yu-Chu, and Fang Hsiang.

<u>2012 Itinerary</u>

Day 0	October 28	Fengyuan → Dongpu
Day 1	October 29	Dongpu → approximately 12.3 km to Batongguan C1
Day 2	October 30	C1 → Guangao → bypassing collapsed cliff through the mountains → Batongguan prairie → Central Gold Mine C2
Day 3	October 31	C2 → Dujyuan Campground → Nan Campground → Dashueiku Cabin C3
Day 4	November 1	C3 → Miasang River C4
Day 5	November 2	C4 → Southern saddle, Gongshan → ruins of Nunusun C5
Day 6	November 3	C5 → Mahoras River C6
Day 7	November 4	C6 → Abolan Valley C7
Day 8	November 5	C7 → Makansutu River C8
Day 9	November 6	C8 → Lambas, beneath Peak 2330 C9
Day 10	November 7	C9 → Mount Aburang → Talumu River C10
Day 11	November 8	C10 → Asanglaijia Shan → Mount Yuli Crossroads → Mount Jhuosi Industrial Road → Jhuosi

Even though Lin Yuan-Yuan had traveled this route with elder master Yang Nan-Chun before, the road had been lost to overgrown vegetation and effaced by landslides in the twenty years since. To keep the historical trail from falling into complete disuse, Yushan National Park commissioned

academic groups to survey and record present conditions. This journey was led by Lin Yuan-Yuan, who had previously guided many academic teams into the mountains. Everyone was used to having him as their guide.

On October 28, 2012, we took a train from Yuli, Hualien County to Fengyuan, Taichung, then transferred to Dongpu. The name Dongpu is transliterated from *tunpu*, which means "axe" in the language of the Tsou people. This land was once Tsou territory and thus received its name because the Tsou people of yore made stone axes here. Around the end of the 18th century, the Isbukun community that originally resided in the Jyunda River region relocated and settled in Dongpu in search of new hunting grounds and lands to cultivate. The Bunun people of the Isbukun community who made their homes in Dongpu called this land *hanupan*, which means "hunting ground" .

That night we stayed in the Aboriginal Dongpu Hall of the hot springs resort area, part of the second and fifth neighborhoods of Dongpu. This area is a tourist neighborhood nowadays because of the hot springs; most of the residents only moved here after World War II. The third and sixth neighborhoods downstream, on the other hand, were once part of the Taki Havilan settlement of the Bunun tribe. The fourth neighborhood is also known as Lower Dongpu, a Han outpost where residents were brought in as lumberers during the Japanese colonial period. After the war, they settled here as well. In the 1980s, Dongpu had the most mountain guides out of all the neighborhoods. Various regulations were implemented during that time, such as license requirements for the guides, but these were nominal gestures. The indigenous people who actually performed these duties were called "mountain attendants".

We visited Lin Yuan-Yuan's master, Wu Wan-Sheng (tribal name Akila), during our stay in Dongpu. He had been a mountain attendant in the '60s and '70s and remained in good health. However, many years of carrying heavy loads had deteriorated his mobility and left him bedridden. Once upon a time, he had borne heavy loads and selected the hundred peaks of Taiwan alongside the four kings of the mountain world. He'd surveyed the Qing Historic Trail with groups of people including Yang Nan-Chun. Brother Lin called him "master" because he'd followed in Wu's footsteps many a time, absorbing plenty of traditional knowledge from him about the mountain forests.

In conversation, I asked what one should call a person who leads the way in the Bunun language. Tama Akila said that the tribespeople used to call them *lavian*, but this might be more akin to a military leader. Brother Lin brought up the term *sanadan*:

> *at tupaun mita aipa tu sanadan, ita makis isabinaz qai paun ta sanadan tuna sia ta maqo sanadan tu makuaq ata tastu lumaq.*
> If a person is just guiding their family, showing the way and serving as their leader, we call him *sanadan*.

The next day, October 29, we set off on our journey from the hot springs of Dongpu. A few steps into the trailhead at the foot of the mountain, we could see the entirety of Dongpu's first

neighborhood upstream from the Zhuoshui River, situated serenely above where the Chenyoulan River and Shalisian River met.

Like most Bunun communities, it was a peaceful place. One would be hard pressed to imagine that a hundred Qing dynasty troops had once been stationed here. According to Professor Sung Ping-Ming and his assistant Chang Chia-Jung from National Dong Hwa University, the heart of the Dongpu community is in its first neighborhood. This area had experienced many political upheavals over time. As noted in scholarship by Chiu Min-Yung and Kao Yu-Te, Dongpu was the largest military encampment along the Middle Road of the Batongguan Historic Trail until April 1874, when Wu Kuang-Liang moved troops to Pushihke (present day Yuli). As the supply center for the entire military, interaction with locals was also an extremely common occurrence. If you dug around there, you'd find ceramic fragments or even copper coins and bullets. During the Japanese colonial period, the first neighborhood was designated as Tompu, Niitaka District, Taichū Prefecture. Now it's part of Yushan National Park, and a place where the Bunun people of Dongpu live in great numbers.

The *Map of Taiwan Island* shows military encampments at Kengtou, Chenkeng, Pamukeng, Yato, and between Talinshe and Mount Huangchi. Pushihke has markers indicating a battalion and a garrison, among other things. Our team would advance along the same path as shown on the map.

In this journey along the Qing Historic Trail, we followed in the footsteps of Brother Lin, the *sanadan* of our expedition. There's no corresponding Chinese word for this Bunun term, but it means something like "the person who shows the way or leads the group." This was aptly demonstrated on October 31, 2012 during our passage from the Central Gold Mine to Dasheuiku. When we passed the Dujyuan Campground and came upon a dangerous section of collapsed terrain, Brother Lin took off his aluminum frame backpack to test the ground first before directing the rest of us on how to traverse this part.

Each time there seemed to be no way forward, Brother Lin would clear a path through the shrubbery using a blade (*via*) in his right hand, his footing steady in spite of the heavy load he bore against his forehead. While in the mountains, we would often discuss our strategy and then make a decision based on Brother Lin's knowledge, as we did on November 2, 2012, on our way from Miasang to Chiu (also known as Nunusun). Arriving at Gongshan, Brother Lin said to us, "The road up ahead is no good." He pointed at the crumbling terrain, noting, "It's hard to make out where the Historic Trail even is. Take a look from here. Seems it won't be easy to go on." The Historic Trail was supposed to take us over the mountain ridge by way of the winding road ahead, but the path was already ruined. We had to decide whether we still wanted to wind high into the mountains as recorded in the itinerary of the troops of yesteryear. We were all pondering how to make a detour when Brother Lin said, "If we go higher, it's going to take us a while. But look! There are already huge trees past the collapsed area. We should be able to just continue on this path." Brother Lin decided we would traverse the crumbling road based on his familiarity with the mountain forests. This was how he deployed his rich understanding of the natural world to lead our group.

At 4:30 p.m. on November 2, we reached an alder forest situated on a huge plain. We decided to set up our camp and rest here for the evening. Alder is a very important tree to our Bunun tribespeople. When we cultivate new land, we plant alder trees first in order to determine whether the land is suitable for growing crops. According to historical records, the land we'd chosen to spend the night on was close to the site of what the Qing dynasty map had labeled as the Yato encampment.

According to the *Memorial Compilation of Four Emperors*, the Qing's trailblazing brigade arrived at Yato on August 8, 1875. They had built the road through Tiehmentung, Batongguan, Pamukeng, Chiacha (today known as Dasheuiku), traversing the Central Mountain Range to Shuangfengjen, Tsushuchiao, and the Dalun river to reach Yato, a distance of 79 *li* (approximately 45 kilometers, 504 meters). They established ten fortresses along the way, with Lieutenant Wu Kuang-Chung and other senior officials overseeing their operations. After passing Yato, the Qing government sent official Teng Kuo-Chih ahead to Pushihke to hire local aboriginals, most likely of the Amis and Plains tribes, and begin digging the trail from the opposite direction, in hopes of connecting both segments. The path they opened was another 19 *li* (approximately 10 kilometers, 944 meters).

I can only imagine how festive and cheerful it was when the troops blazing a path from either side met at Yato, 2,000 meters above sea level, as shown in *The Atlas of Taiwan*. Gathered there were Qing soldiers and commoners, Amis tribesmen, and Plains indigenous people. Who knows what the Bunun people felt about these changes? As night fell around us, I gazed in quiet wonder at how people from the Qing dynasty were able to mark the dotted lines of this road and give it a name.

The communities of Talinshe (*Tatalum*) and Yato (*Nanatuh*) that appear on the map are both situated on the northern side of the Lakulaku River, the same bank along which the Qing dynasty Batongguan Historic Trail was blazed. Forming the eastern section of the Batongguan Historic Trail shown in *The Atlas of Taiwan*, the path itself and the names of places along the route are represented in a fashion similar to a traditional ink painting.

We found a ceramic shard from a cup while we were setting up camp. This made us doubt whether the Qing soldiers, as the official literature purported, intentionally stayed clear of the indigenous people while opening the path and choosing their campsites. How did this ceramic fragment from the Qing infantry end up in the former Bunun lands? I wondered how this ceramic piece came to this tribe. Did a soldier befriend a Bunun tribesman? Was this cup scavenged from leftover belongings after the Bunun fought the Qing troops? Or did it come from trade between the Bunun of these parts and the Qing soldiers? An older person described the Qing soldiers as follows:

> *Uu! Maszang mita. .....Lusqa madopus a. .....Altupa tu bananaz hai pidohpusun a qulbu. Tupaun mita qabas Toluu tu* Qing ping, Qingchao shihtai te jen.
> Right! Just like us…Such long hair…Though they were men, they wore their hair long. We used to call them *Toluu tu* (foreigners from another province), these Qing

soldiers and people of the Qing dynasty.

The head of long hair on the Qing soldiers left the deepest impression on the tribespeople. It is hard to ascertain how much the arrival of the Qing troops impacted the Bunun tribe. The troops remained in Bunun territory for just a few short years. This path fell into ruin because it was simply too difficult to maintain. *The Atlas of Taiwan* marks this path forged by the Qing troops as a dotted line. While camping, I thought about the tribesman's description of the Qing soldier and his long hair as a symbol of the ages that had come and gone in the midst of these mountains.

That night, Brother Lin made dough soup and began to ration our food. The stories came out of him in rapid succession once he had a bit of alcohol. He said that these ruins were called Nunusun, predating the Nanatuh community. Eventually the mist dispersed, the moon shone down, and the stars came into view – such incredible beauty! There had been almost no rain that day, truly a blessing from God (*Diqanin*). We were around 2,100 meters above sea level. We had thought that the Qing Historic Trail mostly maneuvered around indigenous communities, but Brother Lin said the Historic Trail actually did pass through some tribal lands. Nung, who had organized the itinerary on this academic expedition, also speculated that Bunun tribespeople had helped guide the Qing troops to open the road, even though the official documents said the path avoided tribal territories altogether.

At 8:30 a.m. on November 3, 2012, I went ahead to the house beyond the campsite to clean the floors. Brother Lin had said that the land behind the house was a millet field. There probably weren't so many trees here back in the day. These were all sun-loving alder trees, with sparse leaves and a lot of space between each tree. There must have been plenty of sunshine here in the past. Official documents note that Tarunas is the community at the highest elevation, but it seemed that Nunusun, where we'd come, was actually the highest. Brother Lin said that this place had been covered in silvergrass last time he came. For some reason, the silvergrass had completely disappeared. Perhaps it was due to the herds of sambar deer that were flourishing here. This made it easier for me to clean up the home, anyway.

At 9:01 a.m. on November 4, we came upon a house that seemed to be situated atop a field, which we didn't investigate further. This house also had stone steps leading to the entrance, a rarity indeed. Brother Lin said this land was called Banhilan because there were mostly cypress (*Banhi*) trees here. He pointed out a huge bear den atop the Taiwan red pine tree just beyond the home. At this hour and elevation, we were entering bear country!

At 2:30 p.m., we arrived at the Abolan Basin (*Qaqatu*), named by the Bunun to indicate its location inside a concave area. Past the Abolan Basin was an intact stone staircase, made by piling various rocks of different shapes and sizes. Layers upon layers of huge rocks formed some parts, while smaller rocks stacked together built up other areas. The stairs wound beautifully into a sharp turn at this part of the mountain pass.

From the top of the stairs, I looked down upon the Historic Trail, this path that had so influenced the traditional livelihoods of the Bunun people. According to Yang Nan-Chun's *Research Report on the Western Section of Yushan National Park's Pattonkuan Traversing Trail*, the

Qing commander Wu Kuang-Chung led the Flying Tiger Army that built the "Middle Road" here in 1875, now part of the Batongguan Historic Trail, a first-class historic site. The report mentions that the Bunun of Dongpu were enlisted as porters, transporting food supplies and assisting with the removal of the earth and rock that were dug up to open the path.

Traditionally, for the Bunun people, the role of the porter was an indispensable part of their farming and hunting practices. The establishment of this road allowed the Bunun to use their load-bearing skills within an organized and systematized "workplace."

The Batongguan Historic Trail was essentially built next to the mountain ridge along its natural path, very close to the route we took through the tribal settlements and hunting grounds. As we made our way, I wondered whether the Qing soldiers considered the Bunun people's hunting paths at all when they chose this route? Or perhaps the people who guided the soldiers were Bunun hunters themselves? These questions kept spinning in my mind.

For the Han people who'd braved the seas to come here, the mountains and forests in the wilds of Taiwan were untamed territory. Confronting this wilderness with its unknown terrors, the Han often imagined the mountains and forests as a frightful and demonic space. The literature I'd read before coming into the mountains – such as *Six Studies of the Plains Aborigines*, Hsia Chih-Fang's "Poem 53" from *Chronicles of Taiwan*, Ma Ching-Shu's "Poem 14" from *Taiyang Poems*, and Wu Hsing-Cheng's "Into the Mountains" – all mentioned how fearsome the residents of the mountains were, savage like animals. To navigate a land of such horrors, one would need to find a guide who knew it well. When the indigenous tribes witnessed 1,500 people suddenly surge into the mountain forests, they must have felt tremendous unease. This huge group of people that arrived was bigger than any other clan or tribe in the mountains. But if there were a familiar face among the troops, a Bunun person in Bunun garb, I imagine the tribespeople would have felt some measure of relief. They couldn't have foreseen, though, what lay ahead for the Bunun people after the establishment of this trail.

For the Han people of that era, the mountain forests were filled with terrors. What compelled them to forge ahead into the mountains and carve this path? It probably had to do with the islanders from Miyakojima, part of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, who drifted into Bayao Harbor in southern Taiwan in 1871. They mistakenly entered the Mudan community and were murdered by the villagers. Japan had always coveted Taiwan and, through the suzerainty of Ryūkyū, sent troops as punishment in 1874. In October of that year, the British minister mediated an agreement between the Qing government and Japan to withdraw troops. Now known as the Mudan Incident, this encounter precipitated the Qing dynasty's desire to affirm to Japan that the land behind the mountains was Qing territory. In 1875, the Middle Road now known as the Batongguan Historic Trail was established and opened.

We were walking along the Middle Road now and examining the methods by which the Qing soldiers connected this route all the way to Pushihke. When the soldiers came upon ruptures or difficult passages, or if they found other paths encircling the mountain to avoid unnecessary changes in elevation, they dug soil and rock along the side slopes and built the trail next to the ridge so the path would gradually rise. Per our records from the on-site investigation, the average

width of the path reached between two and three meters. An elder from Taluk, Jhuosi Township once said the following about the Qing Historic Trail:

> *Ma-aq a itu-uni Toluu kedaan a hai, mananakis ludun, makuis, mantataluq, ni-i tu maszang daan-Lipuung tu* pingping *mopa ta.*
> The path opened up by the *Toluu* is very narrow and ascends into the mountains. It's rugged and uneven terrain, not at all flat like the roads built by the Japanese.

The stone steps we came upon along the way amply demonstrated the spirit of using "found materials." The stairs in the western part of the trail had been built using slate from the environs, stacked together to form steps. The steps in the eastern section, on the other hand, were made up of large whole rocks or smaller ones piled together.

Once we reached the stairs about 500 meters away from the Abolan Basin in the eastern section, we could see that much of the structure was built from stones of different sizes. Some areas used layers of large rocks to form ascending steps, while others were constructed from small chunks of flat rock nesting on top of one another. The steps were built into beautiful curves wherever the mountain pass turned.

The vestiges of yesteryear continued to emerge as we traveled on. From June 9 to June 17, 1876, after the Middle Road had been opened up for a year, great rains swept through central and southern Taiwan. The Middle Road suffered immense erosion and was thus declared a dead project. Once the garrison withdrew, the Middle Road likely became fragmented and fell into disrepair due to a lack of maintenance. Between November 1875 and April 1877, the period of unobstructed passage lasted probably less than a year.

Several years later, the Middle Road was no longer under the control of the Qing military, but it still appeared whenever the Qing government produced maps. This was meant to indicate to other national powers that the Qing regime owned this land behind the mountains. The mountain guides were often unaware of the true motives of the groups they served. Perhaps it was just a construction project that would allow Han settlers in the west to come and develop Pushihke. The guides must have innocently believed that opening this path would facilitate trade with the Han. They couldn't have imagined the groups they were aiding would be of any consequence to their homeland, that their clansmen would be drawn into the current of civilization in this way. Ultimately, the digging of this road would allow outsiders to come into the mountains for exploration, research, tourism, and military affairs. The head straps of the Bunun would no longer hold up mere slabs of rock, but rather a heavy colonial history.

Sometimes the Bunun guides had pure intentions; they simply wanted to show people into the mountains and introduce their culture and history along the way. They would have had no way of surmising what was in the hearts of others, or understanding the consequences of these explorations.

When I was young, Brother Lin often brought me into the mountain forests and sowed the seeds of my love for nature and for home.

Now that I'm putting this down in writing – in effect, becoming a guide for other groups – will I be able to lead, like my brothers, future generations of my tribespeople down a new path?

Warriors with Mesh Bags

On a trip from April 19 to 30, 2013, we traveled along the Japanese colonial period's Pattonkuan Traversing Trail to arrive at Mashisan, the Bunun's ancestral home. The itinerary was: Nan-an → Walami → Bao-ai → Dafen → Miasan → Tarunas → Mashisan → Taiping Forest Road. The participants in this journey were all rangers from Yushan National Forest: Lin Yuan-Yuan, Kao Chung-Yi, and Su Yin-Hui (of the Taroko tribe). Our primary objective was to surveil the entirety of the park.

Before we reached the slate house in Mashisan, 2,000 meters above sea level, my ranger colleague and brother Kao Chung-Yi, who began working for the national park in August 1991, said, "I spent a lot of time with the elderly folks in the mountains after I entered the park service. Haphazardly I learned a lot along the way, and grew up a great deal myself." After chatting with him a bit, I asked how the tribespeople used to transport slate from the riverbed. He replied, "*subatuan tu batu qai, kunisian sia tinaqismama, mina haul bunul ta, haizamin sia paikadan sia tinaqis sia qais*." ("The slate was brought up from the riverbed using head straps. You can see where the cords of the head strap passed through on the sides of the slate.")

Walking over to the slate, Brother Kao pointed to it and said to me, "*maqa ti un, maqa haiza haqvang tiun*." ("This is it, these triangular carvings.") The tribespeople used to put holes in the four corners of the slate, then pull the cords of the head straps through them. Heavy objects could be lifted by the forehead in this manner, the weight equally distributed. Slate was thus transported into the mountains using head straps. The Bunun people of Dongpu who had aided in the construction of the road during the Qing dynasty must have done something similar to remove or transport rocks.

The head straps that were once used to bear loads for one's clansmen and tribe and to establish a living space of one's own were now in service of an external regime. The tribespeople didn't know what kinds of changes would be brought by completion of this road. Huang Tai-Shan, from the same Nakahila tribe as myself, had once traversed this Historic Trail. "*makusa, muzaikuzaiku sia ta dan a,*" he said. ("It's a narrow and crooked road.") I asked him why this road had to be opened. He replied, "*aupa maqa ta bunun tudiip amalvasvas a, kadan nekun laqaiban na mudadan kilim bunun.*" ("We Bunun once lived in scattered parts of the mountains, so they wanted to open this road in order to reach us.")

After the Qing regime left the traditional Bunun territory of the central mountains, Japan conducted a survey of Taiwan before it even controlled the entire island. In 1896, the Japanese military sent staff from the army headquarters with infantry Lieutenant Nagano Yoshitora to explore the conditions of the mountains. Along with a translator and several bodyguards, Nagano set off on September 17 from Jhuosi village in Yuli (Pushihke). From Pushihke they followed the Batongguan Historic Trail along the northern shore of the Lakulaku River, through Ilugu village,

Maniton village (Makansuto village), Dalun village (Tarunas village), and finally emerged from Dongpu to arrive in Linpipu on November 2. The whole journey took 17 days. A few years later, with the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Taiwan was ceded to Japan.

During the journey from Yuli into the central mountains, Nagano didn't follow the Qing Historic Trail completely. In particular, his route from Jhuosi to Maniton, passing through Ilugu, made use of roads that connected the various Bunun communities. The western portion of his itinerary roughly followed the Batongguan Historic Trail. The remainder went through these connecting roads or Bunun hunting grounds. From this we might deduce that the Bunun were bringing more groups into the mountains along their own contact routes.

On this trip to Mashisan, as I walked along the Historic Trail, I wondered if I had crossed paths with any of my mesh bag-carrying ancestors at any particular turn.

Working in the mountain forests, there is no happier an occasion than when one encounters a fellow clansman. Both parties always take the most prized object from within their bag or backpack and offer it as exchange.

How did my clansmen ancestors bear heavy loads and bring Nagano Yoshitora into the mountains? Beneath the mountains, Brother Lin once showed me the mesh bag of his father Lin Chin-Yuan. This bag traditionally held quarry from the hunt. "In the past, the Bunun stored things in mesh bags," Brother Lin said. "It was mostly used by men to store their quarry after hunting in the mountains. It's made from ramie or Taiwanese rattan, woven by hand."

Mesh bags are used primarily by men to store quarry after a hunt. The bags tend to be large and thick; the largest can contain an entire goat or wild boar. One bears the load by forehead, with straps tied to both ends of the bag and the weight placed on the forehead; the load can also be borne by the shoulders and the forehead together. The bag is structured slightly larger at the top and smaller at the bottom. At the top protrude two wing-like sheets called *vanvan*, which can expand the capacity of the bag or fold into the interior when not needed. The space between the mesh is rather large and can fit a finger, more or less. A mesh bag can sustain the weight of a sambar deer, but one must use head straps in order to conserve effort. The thickness of the netting and the size of the bag are proportional to the load borne by the mesh. The larger and thicker a bag, the more capacity it has to store objects of greater volume.

We can surmise what equipment the Japanese brought into the mountain forests based on Torii Ryūzō's own inventory: a collection of stone tools, plant specimen utensils, instruments for measuring the physical fitness of the indigenous people, an old-fashioned camera, glass plates for film, a change of clothes, rations, and a bowl and chopsticks. These were all transported on the backs of local guides. Back then, the Bunun tribespeople probably put these items in mesh bags and led Torii Ryūzō to the community that, according to historical records, lived at the highest elevation in Northeast Asia: Tarunas, from which they could hear the sound of tribeswomen using pestles as they approached.

Several years later, they also guided Mori Ushinosuke to this community. When grievances erupted here between Salizan, chieftain of Tarunas, and Aziman Siking of Dafen, the tribe sent seven youths with provisions on their backs to help Mori Ushinosuke escape.

On April 24, 2013, we reached the surviving station of the Batongguan Traversing Trail. I mused about Salizan, the chieftain whom I share a name with, and what I would do in his shoes if I were confronted with a political tempest. How would I resolve the plight of the Bunun people facing the Japanese?

From that point on, the mesh bags of the Bunun were no longer used just for quarry. They also came to contain the ambitions of academics, as well as the natural resources of these lands that outsiders coveted.

The turmoil of the Bunun and the Japanese in the mountain forests had started here.

On April 19, 2013, we began a hike in Nan-an, Hualien, ascending the mountains via the Batongguan Traversing Trail on our journey to the ancestral home of Mashisan.

Before the road we were traveling on had been completed, Bunun tribespeople would occasionally accept the "favors" that the Japanese gave to the mountain guides. The hunting rifles and gunpowder were a favorite among the tribe.

In 1915, during the Battle of Qasibanan and the Battle of Dafen (*Bungzavan*), Daha Ali led the tribe in retreat to Yusui and Jyunda. This movement prompted the construction of the Pattonkuan Traversing Trail and the stations along its path. The Bunun people were unwilling to guide others as forced labor. The hunting rifles they had accepted in the past now became weapons to use against the Japanese army.

When Nagano Yoshitora stepped into the Lakulaku River, it was still the Qing dynasty. The formal entrance of the Japanese into the Lakulaku Creek Basin, along with the Battles of Qasibanan and Dafen (known as the Dafen Incident in Japanese), were for the sake of investigating how to dig a road in the creek. This work was carried out in 1917, under the supervision of branch director Captain Matsuo of Yuli, by police inspector Umezawa Satoshi and a group of 48 aboriginals. Fujisaki Seinosuke's *Savages of Taiwan* claims there were only 30 aboriginals.

In any case, they departed from Yuli, crossing the mountain ridges of Jhuosi, Asanglaijia, and Abolan before fording the Makansutu River upstream. After that, they "either walked on the overgrown road or followed the old trail from the Qing dynasty," passing the western foothills of Mount Makansutu until they reached Mashisan village.

The whole journey took nine days, with a primary objective to investigate the intended path of the new trail and ascertain the circumstances of the Bunun tribe. The book notes that they obtained the consent of the leader of Mashisan to dig the Traversing Trail. Returning to my ancestral land, I sometimes wondered how they came to decide the Japanese could build a road here. Faced with an armed company that had entered your own territory, every choice must have been incredibly difficult to make.

Japan began to excavate the Traversing Trail with the assistance of other aboriginal peoples. My tribespeople waged battles to protect our homeland, conflict erupting wherever the road reached. Consequently, the monuments erected by the Japanese on this path include the names of lowland aborigines, in addition to those of the Japanese police who died here.

On April 20, 2013, we reached a monument memorializing "Nojiri Koichi, Rusukau, Babai, Pan A-Sheng, Pan A-Wu, Pan Na-Tsai fallen in battle" about 15 minutes west of the green station.

Brother Lin paused and explained the story behind the monument to me. These names included those of Bunun guides who were accidentally killed. "The tribespeople had quite a fright," he said, pointing at the monument. "When they picked up the decapitated heads, *bungu tu mavia nibung misang uka, at bunun, laqtanun bunun ita.*" ("They noticed the skulls were missing their front teeth and realized these were their own Bunun clansmen, so they threw the heads away on the side of the road.") They only recognized that their compatriots had been killed because the *makavas* decapitated heads were missing teeth. Shedding blood of their own was forbidden (*samu*).

How could they accidentally kill their own tribespeople? This was likely because they all wore Japanese uniforms. Brother Lin said, "*amaqipainukun hulus na patazun bubukun a, ma kunipa an-nanak hulus mama mudaan a.*" ("They couldn't wear Japanese clothes because they would be killed by the Isbukun community. They wore their own garb whenever they transported things.") These two statements indicate that the Japanese enlisted local Bunun people to serve as guides through their traditional homeland, yet the Bunun also hindered the Japanese from entering the mountains. Ultimately, the Bunun played roles both resisting and assisting the Japanese.

Construction of the Pattonkuan Traversing Trail began in 1919 and was completed with the excavations of 1920. A considerable number of aboriginal laborers worked on the project during these two years. According to historical documents, the measurement of the eastern part of the road began in June 1919 under the supervision of technician Zaitsu Kyūhei. It took about 18 days to complete. At eight in the morning on June 10, in the Yuli branch office of the port of Hualien, the excavation team for the Pattonkuan Traversing Trail was assembled, with Umezawa Satoshi of the police force as captain. Besides the excavation and measurement teams, 300 more people participated, including native Taiwanese, as well as indigenous people from the lowlands, plains, and highlands. On the excavation team for the western part of the trail, from Dongpu to the Batongguan plains, an additional 22 frontier guards and 170 indigenous people joined the workforce. From this we can see how many different tribes the Japanese mobilized to excavate the road. All of this had begun with the tribespeople who worked as porters.

At the base of the mountain, Lin Yuan-Yuan introduced an elder from the Sinkan tribe to describe the working conditions of the porter guides during the Japanese colonial era. This man's name was Lin Chi-Nan. Hailing from Abulan, he was 88 years old and lived down the road from Lin Yuan-Yuan's elder brother. He had become the first village chief in Jhuosi after the Japanese retreated. This elder had once brought Japanese scholars on the Batongguan Traversing Trail. He spoke with great vigor despite his advanced age. Besides the overview of tribal history, I was most interested in the story of his transporting things for the Japanese in Batongguan.

He said he had been only 15 or 16 at the time. There were two other clansmen who transported things with him. They were traveling with a Japanese academic whose name he had forgotten. "What were you doing for him?" I asked him.

"*kanmama sia qaimansut,*" replied Lin Chi-Nan. ("Carrying things on our backs.")

I directed another question to him about this transport. "*ma-aq ka ama-un?*" ("What did you carry?")

Lin Chi-Nan said, "*tilas, hulus, kaununkaunun.*" ("Rice, clothes, food.")

"*kamaq a lipun munhan ludun tu,*" I asked. ("What was the Japanese man going to do in the mountains?")

He said:

> *Kilimiismuttu haiza las a. muhalhal a. sizaun amin.matapal.tadini kaupatainam hai unimitamadal til.tasa lisav amin.puskun ita amin.tasa ismut tulas.un ita kiekiu tu makua ismut.maq tu in-iu sizaun zami.*
>
> Going to collect seeds that had fallen from plants. We also searched for leaves and pressed them flat. They were going to take these back to Japan for research, see what kinds of plants these were or if they could make medicine from it.

The Bunun who protected the Japanese academics with hunting rifles, allowing them to carry out their research, had clear knowledge of the mountains' geography and ecology. As more and more tribespeople brought Japanese into the mountains, their traditional knowledge was thus used in this way, while the Bunun's grasp of the mountains weakened until they gradually lost dominance over the region of the Batongguan Traversing Trail. In the end, they had to rise up in revolt with their rifles.

I stood before the monument, lost in thought. The pen I used to write articles outside the mountains was like the hunting rifle. Was it a weapon to wield against mainstream society, or was it a tool to speed up our assimilation?