

## Event Schedule

March 23, 2013  
1:00 p.m.

Special Educators Workshop  
Asia Society, Texas Center  
Performer: Sonja Harasim

March 24, 2013  
4:00 p.m.

Asia Society, Texas Center; and  
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University  
Performer: Cho-Liang Lin

March 26, 2013  
5:00 p.m.

Art Auditorium ART 1.102  
Department of Art and Art History and  
Taiwan Studies Program, Department of Asia Studies,  
University of Texas at Austin  
Performer: Cho-Liang Lin

March 28, 2013  
4:00 p.m.

Davis Auditorium  
Weatherhead East Asia Institute, Columbia University  
Performer: Joseph Lin

March 29, 2013  
5:30 p.m.

S010, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University  
Performer: Lynn Chang

April 1, 2013  
7:30 p.m.

B122 Wells Hall  
College of Arts and Letters, Michigan State University  
Performer: Joseph Lin

April 3, 2013  
4:00 p.m.

Institute of East Asian Studies  
University of California, Berkeley

## Sponsors

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# Returning Souls

讓靈魂回家



A Documentary Film by Hu Tai-Li  
Music by Shih-Hui Chen

March 23 - April 3, 2013

## Synopsis

In the most historic and famous ancestral house of the matrilineal Amis tribe in Taiwan, the carved pillars tell legends such as a great flood, a glowing girl, a descending shaman sent by the Mother Sun, and a patricidal headhunting event. After a strong typhoon toppled the house 40 years ago, the pillars were moved to the Institute of Ethnology Museum. In recent years young villagers, assisted by female shamans, convinced the descendants and village representatives of the necessity to communicate with the ancestors trapped inside the pillars. They eventually brought the ancestral souls (rather than the pillars) back and began reconstructing the house. In an environment highly influenced by western religions, national land policy, and local politics, the young tribal members encounter many frustrations as they dream of cultural revitalization and of bringing back not only the ancestral souls but also the soul of the village. This documentary interweaves reality and legends as well as the seen and the unseen as it records this unique case of repatriation.

## Film Review

“*Returning Souls* provides an extremely nuanced account of the complexities inherent in cultural property claims, raising important questions about who can speak for whom, and about what people hope to recover in cases such as this, for, as one museum employee reflects, ‘the culture is not just these pieces of wood.’ More broadly, the film provides a thought-provoking account of the place of ‘traditional’ religious practice and belief in a rapidly changing context. The plan to regain the ancestral souls is inseparable from the wider context: Amis life, altered first by the Japanese occupation, then by religious conversion—the scenes documenting how Amis beliefs are combined with Catholicism are a particular strength of the film—and more recently by rural-urban migration. The film is a must-see for those with interests in museum studies, religion, material culture, and the changing lives of indigenous people.”

(Ruth E. Toulson, Film Review in Visual Anthropology, 25:450-451, 2012)

## Accolades

*Returning Souls* was awarded the 2012 Jean Rouch International Ethnographic Film Festival (Paris) “Mention du Patrimoine Culturel Immateriel” Award. This is a very prestigious international Ethnographic film award. There were 520 films submitted to the competition; 24 films got invited for the screening at the festival, and 8 of them received awards. In addition, *Returning Souls* has been selected for competition at the 2012 Sole Luna International Documentary Festival (Italy); the 2012 Moscow International Festival of Visual Anthropology; the 2012 Women Make Waves Film Festival (Taipei); and the 2012 Society for Visual Anthropology Ethnographic Film Festival (San Francisco).

Cover: The possessed Tafalong shaman and the Kakita'an heir communicating with ancestors.

Photo Credit: Hu Tai-Li

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## Performers' Biographies

Violinist **Cho-Liang Lin** is lauded the world over for the eloquence of his playing and for the superb musicianship that marks his performances. In a concert career spanning the globe for more than thirty years, he is equally at home with orchestra, in recital, playing chamber music, and in a teaching studio. Performing on several continents, he appears as soloist with orchestras of Detroit, Toronto, Dallas, Houston, Nashville, San Diego and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; in Europe with the Bergen Philharmonic, Stockholm Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, and the English Chamber Orchestra; and in Asia with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Singapore Symphony, Malaysia Philharmonic, and Bangkok Symphony. As Music Director of La Jolla Music Society's SummerFest since 2001, Mr. Lin has helped develop a festival that once focused primarily on chamber music into a multidisciplinary festival featuring dance, jazz and a burgeoning new music program commissioning composers as diverse as Chick Corea and Kaija Saariaho. He is currently professor of violin at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He plays the 1715 “Titian” Stradivarius.

Violinist **Sonja Harasim** is a native of Houston, Texas who has toured the United States, Europe, and Asia as a solo, chamber, and orchestral musician, performing frequently with the Houston Symphony, Houston Grand Opera, and Da Camera of Houston. Recent performance highlights include those at the Library of Congress, Kennedy Center, and La Jolla Summerfest, and collaborations with Cho-Liang Lin, Kenneth Goldsmith, Norman Fischer, James Dunham, Lynn Harrell, Susanne Mentzer, Leone Buyse, and Richie Hawley. She received a Master's degree in Music with Kenneth Goldsmith at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, where she is currently completing her Doctor of Musical Arts degree with Cho-Liang Lin.

A prizewinner of the International Paganini Competition, violinist **Lynn Chang** has enjoyed an active career as soloist, chamber musician, and educator. Chang studied with Ivan Galamian at the Juilliard School and later attended Harvard University. For twenty five years Lynn Chang performed as a member of the Boston Chamber Music Society. He has performed with members of the Juilliard, Guarneri, Cleveland, Tokyo and Orion String Quartets. He currently teaches at the Boston Conservatory, Boston University, and the New England Conservatory. Last December he performed at the Kennedy Center in a nationally televised concert attended by President Obama in tribute to Yo-Yo Ma. In December 2010 he performed at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony in Oslo for Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. He is currently Vice-President of the Board of Overseers for Harvard University.

An active solo and chamber musician, **Joseph Lin**'s recent performances have taken him to Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the National Concert Hall in Taipei, the Wigmore Hall in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. He has appeared as soloist with the Boston Symphony, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Taiwan National Symphony, the Auckland Philharmonia, and the Ukraine National Philharmonic. He is a regular participant at several festivals, including Marlboro and the Seattle Chamber Music Festival. In 2011, Joseph Lin joined the renowned Juilliard String Quartet as the ensemble's first violinist. His recordings include the music of Korngold and Busoni on the Naxos label, and the unaccompanied works of Bach and Ysayé on the Fine N&F label. His teachers have included Mary Canberg, Shirley Givens, and Lynn Chang. Mr. Lin graduated magna cum laude from Harvard in 2000. In 2004 he studied Chinese music in Beijing as a Fulbright Scholar. In 2011, Mr. Lin joined the faculty of the Juilliard School.

a Fulbright Fellowship to live in Taiwan and research aboriginal music and Nanguan music. At Academia Sinica she met anthropologist and filmmaker Hu Tai-Li, and they formed an artistic partnership. Shih-Hui Chen wrote the film score for Hu Tai-Li's documentary film, *Returning Souls*, which tells the story of the aboriginal Amis, and how their young people recovered the souls of their ancestors for the tribe.

**Murray A. Rubinstein** is a Senior Research Scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University. Professor Rubinstein writes on Christianity in China, Chinese popular religion, the socio-political development of Taiwan, the Republic of China, and Fujian, The People's Republic of China, and most recently on the evolution of the Taiwan Economic Miracle.

Hu, Chen, and the film's main characters at the Chi-Mei Amis tribe screening.

Photo Credit: Yu Ying-Jun.



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## Making the Film, Returning Souls Hu Tai-Li

A documentary does not simply record facts. By sharing what I have filmed, I hope to stimulate thought on a variety of cultural issues. Of all my work, both anthropological research and ethnographic documentaries, Returning Souls has the closest links to my workplace, Academia Sinica's Institute of Ethnology. In August 2003, when young members of the Amis tribe from the village of Tafalong visited the Museum of the Institute of Ethnology, I sensed that something special had been put into motion. I was a research fellow and convener of the Institute's museum committee, so this story literally appeared on my doorstep and there was no way I could ignore it. Picking up a video camera is my natural reflex, but it is also an ideal tool for organizing thoughts, observing changes, recording communication, and for introspection.

I was truly moved by the young Amis from Tafalong, and their leader, a young man called Fuday. They came to request the return of wooden pillars from the Kakita'an family ancestral house that are preserved in the Institute's museum. By bringing the pillars home, they hoped to restore the soul of their village. That soul had been eaten away by the destruction of the Kakita'an ancestral house, the displacement of their ancestors' souls, and the impact of outside culture on their way of life. They thought that if they could just bring back the pillars and rebuild the Kakita'an ancestral house, they could recapture their culture and rituals and revitalize the spirit of Tafalong.

Before Taiwan was settled by large numbers of ethnic Han Chinese, it was inhabited by Austronesian-speaking peoples. Today, the Taiwanese government recognizes 14 indigenous tribes with a combined 520,000 members who make up 2.25 percent of Taiwan's population. The largest of Taiwan's tribes, the Amis, has nearly 200,000 members who primarily reside along the island's eastern coast. With years of experience researching Taiwan's Paiwan tribe, I had seen carved columns in the houses of Paiwan nobility; but in all the literature on the matrilineal Amis, the Kakita'an ancestral house in Tafalong is the only recorded structure with carved pillars. With carvings depicting dramatic tales of a big flood, a glowing girl, marriage between siblings, shamans descending to earth, patricide, and the origins of headhunting, the Kakita'an house was the most famous, most intriguing example of Amis architecture.

In the past, the Kakita'an family had rights to the land in Tafalong and was responsible for the rituals to venerate their ancestors as well as the heads they had hunted. Among the oral histories told by tribal elders during the Japanese occupation, Tafalong elder Kati Rata said that the brothers who killed their father held a grand ceremony to venerate his head, which is the origin of Tafalong's New Year festival, Ilisin. While the heir of the Kakita'an family of the matrilineal Ami tribe was a woman, her brother presided over the rituals performed in the house. The uniqueness of the Kakita'an house made it a focus of the Japanese colonial government (1895-1945), which was determined to stamp out all indigenous headhunting and related rituals. The government pushed the Kakita'an family out of the house and gave the rights to both house and land to a public foundation. In 1935, the house was designated a historic site, provisions were made for its maintenance, and it was turned into an exhibit. The structure was the only traditional Amis ancestral house that had not been demolished, so to the Amis it had unique cultural significance.

After the Japanese colonial period ended in 1945, Taiwan came under Republic of China rule. In 1958, Typhoon Winnie blew the Kakita'an house to the ground. Neither the Kakita'an family nor the village had the funds to rebuild. Furthermore, tribe members were converting to Christianity, especially Catholicism and Presbyterianism, in large numbers, so traditional rituals were rarely performed. Institute of Ethnology researcher Mr. Liu Pin-Hsiung was asked by another researcher,

## The Filmmaker and the Composer: Hu Tai-Li and Shih-Hui Chen Murray A. Rubinstein

During the spring of 2013, Hu Tai-Li and Shih-Hui Chen, two Taiwanese-born scholars-artists, will present an original mixed media event at a number of major American universities.

Hu Tai-Li did her Ph.D. in anthropology at the City University of New York, studying with Professor Burton Pasternak. She also took anthropology classes at Columbia University with Professor Myron Cohen, who will host the event, which is sponsored by Columbia's Weatherhead East Asian Institute.

When Dr. Hu returned to Taiwan, she became a member of the Institute of Ethnology, which is housed in a building the size of a village. She first did the usual kind of clear-cut fieldwork research and writing. Her first book, *My Mother-in-Law's Village* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1984), is a detailed study of a dying rural culture in Taiwan. The book is written with clarity and deep feeling for the individuals and families facing such profound change.

In the years that followed she produced five more books before shifting her mode of scholarly presentation and becoming a self-taught documentary filmmaker – a radical step, but one particularly suited to the way she approached the material. Her first film, *Passing through My Mother-in-Law's Village*, expanded upon her first book and was a superb piece of work; and she has since proven herself in film after film, examining yuanzhumin religion and culture in films such as *Stone Dream*, a masterpiece that illuminates the life of a people and their religion. *Voices of Orchid Island* is another quietly powerful film, which is both an introduction to a well-known island and its people and a condemnation of Taiwan's methods of storing atomic waste from their reactors. Her other ethnographic films include: *The Return of Gods and Ancestors*, *Songs of Pasta'ay*, *Sounds of Love and Sorrow*, *After Passing*, and most recently, *Returning Souls*.

The familiarity with and fluency in both Taiwanese and U.S. cultures evidenced in Hu Tai-Li's work are apparent in the career and the work of Shih-Hui Chen as well. Born in Taiwan, Professor Chen did a DMA at Boston University and currently teaches at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

Recognition of a composer's talent comes in a number of ways; commissions are of prime significance. Professor Chen has received commissions from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Chamber Music America, Meet The Composer, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Barlow Foundation. As well, the orchestral works she has composed have been performed by a number of major orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and the Utah Symphony. She has also composed chamber music, which has been presented by the Arditti Quartet, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, the Seattle Chamber Players, the Ensemble Instrumental Appassionata (in Quebec, Canada), and the Freon Ensemble (in Rome, Italy). Recent performances of Professor Chen's compositions include *Mei Hua* for String Quartet by the Formosa Quartet at Lincoln Center, the Library of Congress, and throughout the UK; *Fu II* by eighth blackbird with Yang Wei and Cliff Colnot in the Contempo Series at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago; *Returnings* by Dinosaur Annex in Boston; ... becoming... a mini-flute concerto by Carol Wincenc at the Juilliard School; and *Our Names* by Network for New Music in Philadelphia.

Finally, Professor Chen's work has received significant recognition in the form of grants that have included a Guggenheim Fellowship, an American Academy in Rome Prize, and in 2010,

gelical spirit, had adherents in Imperial Japan; in the 1910s this church moved to Taiwan and began its work in the city of Taizhong on the western coast facing Fujian. Around the same time the True Jesus Church was founded by a number of Shandong ren who heard the preaching of charismatic missionaries in north China. By the mid-1920s the True Jesus Church with its use of glossolalia and its Saturday as Sabbath (Sabbatarian) had spread to Fujian. From there it was a short, if dangerous, cross-strait voyage to Taiwan to plant this dynamic, charismatic church.

The fourth phase of Taiwanese Christianity began in 1945 and continues to this day. This phase began when the Nationalist government (the ROC) took over the island from Japan. The Christian presence grew; by the 1970s the Presbyterian Church and certain Catholic missionary orders were in conflict with the Nationalist government and its ruling party, the Guomindang (Kuomintang, or KMT). The KMT were always wary of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT). To counter its power and influence, they welcomed other missionary groups and churches that were active in China and had become targets of PRC repression. The result was a missionary invasion that transformed the Taiwanese Christian community.

One of the first of these mission bodies was the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The Southern Baptists established themselves in Taipei and developed a network of churches that spread into the suburbs. The church grew among the mainlander community and in the 1950s bought land in a rural corner in the most southeastern section of the city, where they built a seminary complex. But the SBC did not evangelize in the Taiwanese community; this mistake would curtail their growth, and prove fatal to it.

Mainstream denominations such as the Methodists, the Anglicans, the Lutherans, and the Assemblies of God all sent missionaries to the island. For the most part, these missionaries worked among the people they knew best, the newly arrived mainlanders who had been part of or related to the KMT, or had been large-scale businessmen or financiers and fled in fear of Communist reprisals. In effect these new churches left the Taiwanese and Hakka communities, who had inhabited and developed the island since the 1620s, to the Presbyterians and indigenous and independent churches like the True Jesus Church.

In the first two decades of this missionary invasion there was a marked increase in the number of Christians in Taiwan, but by the mid-1960s there was a decided leveling off of church growth. Some scholar missionaries conducted research to discover the reasons for this leveling off, but although they published their findings, they could do little to halt the process. Yet the churches did grow in influence, if not in number of believers.

In the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the new millennium dramatic and important changes in Taiwan affected the nature of Taiwanese Christianity and the larger Taiwanese religious systems. Christianity became a means of developing a relationship with 100,000,000 Chinese on the mainland. Links had been forged since 1987 when the PRC opened to the people of Taiwan, both waishenren (mainlander) and bendiren (Taiwanese). The strongest of the indigenous Taiwanese churches played a role in this process; church leaders such as Zhou Lianhua of the Southern Baptist Convention became key figures in this process of cross-strait interaction. Taiwanese churches were also part of the larger movement of charismatic and Holiness forms of American and European Christianity, participating in globalized religious traditions, while the Christian churches in Taiwan, especially the Presbyterians whose membership was fifty percent yuanzhumin, played an important role in the attempts of tribal peoples to gain higher status and more respect in Han-dominated Taiwan. A good proportion of Catholic and True Jesus congregations are also tribal people. The role of Christianity in the globalized and more integrated world culture is demonstrated in the Hu/Chen mixed media production; the story behind *Returning Souls* was due in part to the impact and influence of the Christian movements on tribal people such as the Amis.

Mr. Jen Shien-Min, to conduct a survey in Tafalong. While there, Mr. Liu interviewed the former chief Wang Jen-kuang (who had been the township head and was a county legislator at the time) about the Kakita'an house. Wang took him to the site, which now consisted only of a pile of carved pillars. Mr. Liu said, "If no one in the village can pay for reconstruction and there are no objections, I will bring them back to the Institute of Ethnology! Letting such significant carvings sit out in the elements to rot would be a shame." Mr. Liu told me that at the time he did not have any contact with the Kakita'an family, but with the assistance of Wang Jen-kuang he received approval from the village to bring the wooden pillars back to Taipei.

Was the Institute of Ethnology's acquisition of these items legitimate? In addition to showing the Institute's perspective, I took pains to highlight the feelings of the tribe members in this film. To the museum, the pillars are simply an artifact to catalog and display, but to the people of Tafalong, they hold the very souls of their ancestors. The souls wanted to see their Kakita'an descendants; they wanted to go home! In August 2004, following a grand pig offering and a ritual by Tafalong shamans, tribal village representatives brought the souls back to Tafalong, but left the carved pillars at the Institute. With Institute of Ethnography funding, the Kakita'an family and the village's young people worked together to commission new carvings. The Kakita'an family also raised funds and in January 2006 the reconstruction was completed. Following the reconstruction, land disputes put the structure's future into question. After a period of struggle, the rebuilt Kakita'an ancestral house was finally named a cultural landscape by the government in February 2007.

During the eight years I spent on this film, I documented the devastation wrought on the Kakita'an ancestral house and Tafalong's traditional culture during the Japanese occupation. In addition, the film shows the huge impact of Western religion, land policy, and a changing political landscape following Nationalist rule. I also captured the reconstruction of the ancestral house, villagers' hopes to revive traditional culture, and even the hardships and setbacks faced by the ancestral spirits when they were returned to the tribal village. Legends and reality, conflict and adaptation are all interwoven in my film. I did not want to portray a utopian illusion. I believe that every individual and organization can learn to use setbacks as an opportunity for reflection and ultimately growth.

In addition to thanking the people of Tafalong, I would also like to express my appreciation to Shih-Hui Chen, skilled composer and Associate Professor of music composition in the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University, for her generosity and dedication. She penned the outstanding score for *Returning Souls* during her time in 2011 as a Visiting Scholar at the Academia Sinica's Institute of Ethnology. Her score brings a richness in gradation and texture to the film that I could not have imagined. What could be called the film's "theme song" was performed by Kakita'an family member Panay Saumah. Her clear, expansive voice truly astonishes and inspires. Jaw harp musician Lifok, a member of the Amis tribe, also brings us the profound emotion of the Amis culture through his music on the soundtrack. I would also like to thank the primary cameraman for the film, Mr. Lee Jong-Wang, who helped to make up for my relatively unskilled hand in the early days of the project. He also gave very straightforward and invaluable suggestions after reviewing the first cut of the film; for this I am also extremely grateful.

## Composing the Music for Returning Souls

### Shih-Hui Chen

When I compose music I am absorbed completely in the search for that one perfect note, the one that resonates with my inner voice. I do not worry about whether this note will please others, because I believe that before I can please others I need to please myself. I have worked in this way for almost 40 years, and it has served me well. But listening for inner music is a solitary pursuit.

As a musician, then, I am intuitive, so it is probably not surprising that in my personal life I can be impulsive, following my passions and emotions without thinking about the outcome. A year after my mother's death, the loneliness of searching for that one perfect note while living in an adopted country sparked the desire to return to my native country of Taiwan after a thirty year absence, to search for something that was missing in my life.

On my return to Taiwan I stumbled upon Hu Tai-Li's film project. The story of young Amis tribe members who were hoping to revitalize their tribal way of life through returning their ancestors' souls unexpectedly mirrored my personal search. Although the specifics of geography, time, age, and belief differed, we shared the intention of finding a more meaningful purpose to our lives, which is a driving force in human creativity. The strong sense of empathy that their story engendered lessened my sense of isolation. While organizing this tour of Returning Souls across the United States, I also found a sense of community with the people who are presenting this event. These are people who are interested in other people's stories, and people like Hu Tai-Li, who has been telling other people's stories for forty years.

As well as empathizing with the young Amis in the film, I admired them for their determination to find answers despite many obstacles. Compared to their quest to retrieve their ancestors' souls and rejuvenate their culture, my self-absorption as a composer seeking to find that one perfect note began to seem trivial, or at least limiting. While finding the right notes is my job as a composer, becoming a member of this larger circle, hearing and becoming part of their stories, has been an empowering and inspiring experience.

In the end, articulating what I am doing, and why I am doing it is still difficult. I can only say that the impulse to share Hu Tai-Li's film with others is strong. Perhaps someone in the audience will become aware of their own parallel intention. Perhaps their sense of isolation will be lessened, or their courage deepened. Whether they be Amis or not, may their souls be returned.



Hu at the carved pillar in the rebuilt Tafalong Kakita'an house.  
Photo Credit: Lee Jong-Wang

## The Christian Presence on Taiwan, 1625-2012

### Murray A. Rubinstein

There have been four distinct phases of Christianity in Taiwan. The first occurred in 1625 when the Dutch East India Company (in Dutch, the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) established a military and commercial presence in a southwestern area of the island they called Zeelandia and the Chinese would call Taiwan. Pastors of the Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) Church accompanied the Dutch East India military men, merchants, and bureaucrats, to minister to their religious needs, but also to try to convert the island's people. Once the Dutch presence in Taiwan stabilized, a number of Dutch Reformed pastors sailed to southern Taiwan to evangelize among the Chinese community that had been evolving under the protection of the VOC, and, more importantly, among the plains aborigine tribes (yuanzhumin) in southwestern Taiwan. During their forty years on the island they were able to develop communities of believers primarily among these non-Han peoples.

The second phase of Christianity began two hundred and forty years later with the arrival of Presbyterian missionaries to Tainan in 1865, and ended in 1895 when the Japanese took the island from the Qing Dynasty as a spoil of war. In the mid-1860s British Presbyterian missionaries based in the southern Fujian city of Xiamen took advantage of the dramatic new opening of parts of China to establish a missionary presence in Tainan. A decade later missionaries from Ontario in Canada, led by George Leslie McKay, established a presence in Tamsui, a river town just north and west of the Taipei Basin.

The Presbyterians worked among the Minnan (Taiyu) population and also among the aborigine populations of the island's mountainous interior, who had been pushed out of the western coastal plains by the immigrant Han from Fujian and northern Guangdong. The aboriginal people, who came to be called shandiren, or mountain people, are the subject of most of Hu Tai-Li's documentaries.

Along with the Presbyterians, Catholic mission orders took advantage of the new Taiwanese Treaty Ports and established themselves in northern Taiwan, not far from where they had had a mission in the Dutch period, which the Dutch had taken over when they drove the Catholics out of the island. Both the Presbyterian Church and the Roman Catholic Church were able to develop a presence in the island despite local Han opposition.

The third period in Christian history, the era of Japanese colonialism, began in 1895. The Japanese attempted to make Taiwan the "perfect colony" of their empire in the making. Japanese military men, civilian administrators, and high-level businessmen were engaged in projects that involved both "regime change" and "nation building." They introduced a modern educational system that went up through high school, and built a university in the capital. They developed highways and railways up and down the island's western coastal plains. They introduced modern industries, building the foundation for the Taiwanese post-war developmental miracle. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they reorganized agriculture in Taiwan, making it the breadbasket, or rice bowl, of Japan. The Japanese did not interfere with the Presbyterian or Roman Catholic work of evangelization, which included church planting, but also the provision of educational, medical, and social services to the Taiwanese. The Japanese looked upon missionaries as kindred souls, being also modernizers and educators; therefore they allowed the churches to continue to operate primary, middle, and high schools for Taiwanese, and during much of Japanese rule the churches, with their seminaries and education network, were able to enjoy life as normal.

Two other churches were established in Taiwan during the Japanese era, the Holiness Church and the True Jesus Church. The Holiness Church, a product of the English-Methodist evan-

his wife, two leading singers of the southern Amis, were sampled by the German pop group Enigma in their song “Return to the Innocence,” which was later used in a television commercial for the 1996 Summer Olympics; this led to a lawsuit and heightened Taiwanese awareness of the music.

Today, the Amis harvest festival and their culture in general continue to experience changes from government intervention and the effects of tourism as well as the influence of mass media and modern lifestyles. As we see from the film, however, there is a rising consciousness among their younger generation of the need to revive Amis cultural traditions. Their music and dance are at the core of such efforts.

**Ying-fen Wang** is a professor at the Graduate Institute of Musicology, National Taiwan University. Her research interests include *nanguan* music, Taiwanese aboriginal music, music and sound technology in colonial Taiwan, and analysis of historical recordings.



The renovated Tafalong Catholic church  
Photo Credit: Hu Tai-Li

## Amis Wood Carving and the Kakita'an Panels Yun-Chiahn C. Sena

Using mostly natural materials, the Amis create visual images that express their beliefs and emotions and document their history and lives. Their rich visual culture can be seen in traditional handicrafts such as weaving, pottery, and wood carving. The angular and rugged images, imbued with force and passion and filled with totems and symbols, clearly mark the visual identity of the Amis.

The Amis prefer wood carving for complex story-telling. Using driftwood, wooden pillars, or planks, they create images in low and medium bas-relief. Traditionally these wood carvings decorated houses, for instance on interior pillars or the space above the entrance. Wood carvings also marked important public locations such as a gate or a bridge. Their most important role, however, is to serve as the focus in a spiritual encounter or a ritual performance.

The Amis practice shamanism in their traditional religion. Women shamans communicate with deceased ancestors on behalf of the living descendants by way of spiritual possession, which is often initiated with images on wood carvings. Portraits of past tribal leaders, joined with important historical events and the Amis origin stories, are rendered in lively carved images that allow the Amis to visualize the unseen world of the dead and to generate a shared historical memory. The most important examples of such wood carvings are the wooden panels from the Kakita'an ancestral shrine in the Tafalong settlement, the oldest and largest Amis settlement in eastern Taiwan.

Three themes are commonly depicted in Amis wood carving. The first and perhaps the most common theme consists of symbolic and totemic motifs, such as the sun, which symbolizes motherhood in Amis culture. Traditional Amis society was matrilineal; images of the sun appeared often in wood carving to express adoration of mothers and reverence towards motherly authority. As a companion to the sun, the moon also was depicted to symbolize fatherhood. Another common motif was the white crab, the totem of the Tafalong settlement. According to local legend, there used to be a plentitude of white crabs in the area. Since crabs can live on land and in water, they were considered an ideal symbol for the Tafalong Amis, who were skilled both in hunting and fishing.

The second common wood carving theme portrays the origin and legends of the Amis. Like many Pacific aboriginal tribes, the Amis have a flood legend. The Amis believed that they were descendants of a brother-and-sister couple who escaped a great flood that destroyed their homeland. On a wooden mortar, the couple washed ashore at eastern Taiwan and subsequently began the Amis tribe. This origin story is depicted on one of the ten panels originally erected in the Kakita'an ancestral shrine.

Another legend depicted on the Kakita'an panels accounts for the head hunting ritual. In this story, two brothers beheaded a stranger who offended them by muddying the river water. They were shocked to discover that the stranger was in fact their father. The older brother, Mayao, who cut off the father's head, later buried himself in repentance. On the Kakita'an panel a standing figure of Mayao just before he sinks into the ground is depicted in a weighty and somber carving, vividly portraying a man in anguish.

Along with these myths and legends, portraits of historical tribal leaders who made contributions to the establishment and prosperity of the tribe are also represented on the Kakita'an panels. The juxtaposition of tribal leaders and mythical stories joins the Amis historical past with its legendary past in a continuous narrative, which is essential for forging the Amis cultural identity.

The third theme in Amis wood carving is about everyday experience. Mundane and joyful moments, such as pounding millet, dancing, and courting, are depicted with lively details. These images offer information about the customs and material culture in traditional Amis society and a way of life that is rapidly disappearing.

Amis tribal leaders have worked with non-native social groups to revitalize and preserve traditional Amis culture. In one such collaboration, children of the Tafalong Elementary School are given lessons on wood carving, a traditional skill that had nearly vanished. The results are encouraging and inspiring. Through learning the history and symbolism of traditional Amis wood carving, the young Amis reacquaint themselves with their traditions, experience the artistic and cultural journey of their ancestors, and bring new meanings and prospects to their culture.

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Young men dance and sing at the Tafalong new year ceremony (Ilisin).  
Photo Credit: Hu Tai-Li

## Songs of the Amis Ying-fen Wang

One of the most amazing things about the music of the Taiwanese aborigines is the diversity of their singing styles. Each aboriginal tribe in Taiwan has its unique way of singing, and even the subgroups within a tribe sing differently. The Amis are no exception.

Geographically and culturally, the Amis, who live on the east coast of Taiwan, can be divided into three subgroups of northern, middle, and southern. Northern Amis live in villages in northern Hualien county, southern in Taitung county, while middle Amis, like those in Tavalong, the village in this film, live between the two.

Musically the three subgroups differ in their ways of singing call and response. In the songs of the northern Amis the call is longer and more florid; the response is much shorter (often only one or two notes) and is sung by the chorus in unison. The southern Amis, in contrast, are famous for their complex polyphonic singing, with the chorus joining the leader in the response by octave doubling, imitating, or developing an independent melody; this results in the so-called free counterpoint, with the number of parts ranging from two to as many as five. Besides polyphonic singing, the southern Amis differ from the northern in that their call and response are usually of equal length, although sometimes the response is longer than the call. As for the middle Amis, their songs exhibit an interesting mixture of northern and southern singing styles.

Despite their differences, the songs of each subgroup share common features that set Amis songs apart from those of other aboriginal tribes. Most importantly, the majority of Amis songs are pentatonic, and the male voice is often sung in high falsetto and with ornaments. The Amis consider the ability to add ornaments to vary a melody such an important singing technique that it serves as an aesthetic principle for judging the artistry of a singer.

Amis songs are also distinctive from those of other tribes (except for the Puyuma, who also live in the Taitung county as the southern Amis) in that they are mostly sung in non-lexical vocables such as ho, hay, yan, etc. The use of such vocables makes communal singing easier. It also gives Amis the freedom to occasionally improvise lyrics that express their thoughts and emotions.

Singing is an integral part of Amis life. Amis sing while alone in the fields, or when logging in the mountains as a team. Amis sing when friends and family get together. And singing is indispensable in their many rituals and festivals.

The harvest festival, commonly known as Ilisin, is probably the most important annual event for the Amis, a time when the male age-grade system is solidified, a time for Amis to connect to ancestral spirits and deities, and a time for courtship among boys and girls. The most conspicuous feature of the Ilisin costume is the tall, feathered headdresses the young men wear. The singing and dancing of the Ilisin of the northern Amis were so spectacular that they became an icon of the Taiwanese aborigines during Japan's colonial rule (1895-1945). Starting in the late 1920s, the Japanese combined the Amis harvest festival with the Japanese Shinto shrine in hopes of turning the Amis into "civilized" Japanese farmers. By the early 1930s, the Hualien county government was promoting the Amis harvest festival as a tourist attraction and advertising it as such in the newspapers.

After 1945, the Amis founded the Amis Cultural Village to continue selling Amis music and dance to tourists. In the 1960s and '70s, Amis songs were widely distributed on records and appropriated by other aboriginal tribes as well as by Han Chinese. In 1994, the voices of Difang and