

Location: Approximately 1,300 Bunun live in the southern part of Fujian Province on the east coast of China and in Chinese cities. The vast majority of Bunun — more than 34,000 — live in the mountains of central Taiwan.

Identity: The Bunun, the Ami, and the Paiwan are the three tribes which have been combined to form the official Gaoshan (High Mountain) nationality in China.¹

Language: Bunun is one of 22 Gaoshan languages spoken in Taiwan.² All belong to the Austronesian language family. “Bunun oral tradition is particularly rich in animal and hunting stories, reflecting the great importance hunting is to the Bunun economy. Animal stories include not only the transformation of humans into animals, but sexual relations between humans and animals, as well as metamorphosis of animals into humans.”³ The Bunun believe that they once had a written script, “but the ancestors were not careful and the writing fell into the river and floated away, only to be picked up by the plains people.”⁴

History: The Bunun believe the human race was started when a gourd fell from heaven. It split open, and the first man and woman emerged. They also have a legend about a great flood long ago. They say it was caused by a snake which blocked up the river until all of the earth was inundated.⁵ The Bunun have many theories about their origins. “One is

that they originated from a branch of the ancient Yue nationality on mainland China and then mixed with Aborigines from Malaysia and the Ryukyu Islands.”⁶

Customs: The Bunun sometimes “practice the extraction of certain front teeth as a sign of social identity as well as adulthood. The Bunun are good singers and often sing when working.”⁷ When a Bunun dies, that person is buried in a crouching position beneath the hearthstone of the family home. Traditionally, “the body was first wrapped in cloth and placed on an open platform for three years; following this first stage, the bones were removed and buried beneath the house.”⁸

Religion: Traditionally the Bunun in Taiwan were polytheists, but today most are Christians. “Bunun oral tradition mentions periodic offerings to the moon, upon which the agricultural calendar is based, but information on the original Bunun religion is too scarce to show clearly to what extent the moon and *dehanin* (heaven) may have been personified. In addition to the male hereditary priesthood, charged with the



Mike Fioritto

management of agricultural rituals, the Bunun had male shamans along with female ones. The shamans’ concern was sickness and sorcery.”⁹

Christianity: In 1946 there were no Christians among the Bunun in Taiwan. By 1959, however, converts numbered 8,881 and had increased to 12,234 by 1969.¹⁰ Today the Presbyterians alone have 14,990 Bunun believers in 76 churches.¹¹ Hu Wen-chih, who was used by God to win many Bunun to Christ in Taiwan, also translated the New Testament into Bunun in 1973. The Bunun church in Taiwan has sent missionaries out to Japan and Borneo. The Bunun in China, however, have never experienced a revival and cannot read the Bunun Bible that is only available in Taiwan.



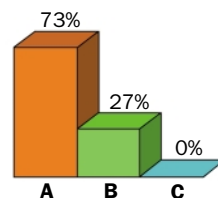
Population in China:
 1,000 (1990)
 1,290 (2000)
 1,660 (2010)
Location: Fujian
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Bunun

Countries: Taiwan, China
Pronunciation: “Boo-non”
Other Names: Bunti, Vonun, Bunan, Bubukun, Vunum, Vunun, Vunung, Bunum
Population Source: 1,000 (1990 AMO); Out of a total Gaoshan population of 2,909 (1990 census); 34,000 in Taiwan (1993 P. Johnstone)
Location: S Fujian: Near Zhangzhou; Many Bunun live in Beijing and Shanghai municipalities and other cities.

Status: Officially included under Gaoshan
Language: Austronesian, Formosan, Paiwanic
Dialects: 0
Religion: Polytheism, Ancestor Worship
Christians: None known
Scripture: New Testament 1973; Portions 1951; Not available in China
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: Bunun #1990
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: BNN00

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity