

Traditional Education and Its Significance in Taiwan Aborigines: A Case Study of Hunting Education as Carried Out by the Pasikau Tribe, Part of the Bunun People

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Abstract

With the dawn of the modern age, native people's traditional cultures have been influenced by mainstream culture, losing some of their original features, and impacting negatively on traditional cultural education. Determining how to pass on native people's traditional ecological knowledge using their own traditional methods of education could be the solution to this problem; consequently, understanding native people's traditional systems of education has become an important issue. This paper focuses on the Pasikau tribe, who are part of the Bunun people residing in Taitung County, Taiwan. Using the techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviews, it discusses the process of Bunun hunter education in order to describe the shape and inherent strategies behind the Bunun's education of its hunters; it also aims to outline a framework for such education. The research shows that Bunun education consists of three layers: family education, tribal education, and nature and ecological education. These areas can be further subcategorized into four parts: the study of rites and ceremonies, physical education, ethics education, as well as hunting and participating in the Telling of Heroic Deeds ceremony, which is used as a platform to demonstrate the knowledge acquired by the student. Bunun hunting education requires specific environmental conditions in order to be successful; therefore, it is necessary to determine how to protect native people's traditional culture through the medium of their own unique education system.

Key Words: social cognitive theory, traditional ecological knowledge, cultural inheritance, multicultural

1. Introduction

Within the field of human rights and its development as a concept, a common criticism is that development of cultural rights is stunted or even overlooked (Symonides, 2000). For any society, promoting respect for cultural diversity and protecting cultural rights is a critical factor in resolving social conflict. With regard to Taiwan, the main violations of cultural rights have been directed at native peoples. Historically, as Taiwan has modernized, the native peoples' traditional culture has felt the impact of governmental administration and capitalist restraints; as a result, changes in the cultural environment have continually increased.

The traditional ways in which native people have nurtured their culture have given way to the modern educational system, and emerging online digital media has begun to change native peoples' traditional cultural carriers; this will cause further changes in the future.

Taiwan's focus on native people's education began towards the end of the 1980s, and took on a more concrete form in 1998 with the implementation of the "Native People's Education Law" (Li, 2000). This legislation afforded native people's a legal platform and a strong basis for the next generation to pass on their traditional culture and ensure its continued survival. However, the implementation of the education policy is influenced and restricted by many different factors such as: students' acceptance of their own culture, inadequate number of teaching staff, and the irrelevance of lessons to everyday life. These restrictions have meant that native people's cultural education is yet to be effectively implemented in schools catering to native people, causing concern over the transmission of traditional culture to the next generation (Tang, 2002). Aside from this, much of the native people's traditional education is rooted in their everyday lives, with participation in calendric rites and learning of taboos forming a standard for the transmission of the culture; this makes it considerably difficult to pass on the traditions to younger generations. Previous research has shown, for example, that regular school-based education encroaches on native people's knowledge of the environment (Godoy et al., 2009). Therefore, as regular school-based education seems ill-equipped in aiding the transmission of native people's culture, the understanding and utilization of traditional education methods is one way in which this problem could be abated.

Traditionally, the Bunun people are located in the central, southern, and eastern mountains of Taiwan at an elevation of over one thousand meters, and can, therefore, be considered an example of typical mountain dwellers. The Bunun calendar is regarded one of the most detailed and complex in Taiwan (Mabuchi, 1974), with one hundred and thirty one rites and ceremonies each year (Wei, 1972). The Bunun calendar is closely linked to an agrarian lifestyle, especially with regard to hunting rites and millet production (Yang, 2011).

From the perspective of social cognitive theory, education consists of the interplay between the social environment, inner stimuli (cognition and emotion), and behavior (Bussey, & Bandura, 1999). Throughout the process of traditional Bunun cultural education, as there is such a large number of rites and ceremonies that make up the calendric cycle, the cultural significance of the education process is very high and closely linked to the yearly rites and ceremonies. As this education process is different to the modern system of education, it is worth reconsidering the value of native people's education style. This paper focuses on the process of Bunun hunter education in order to clarify the makeup of Bunun hunter education and the principles behind the Bunun hunter's relationship with nature with a view to establishing a framework for the traditional education of a Bunun hunter. It is hoped that this will encourage a rethinking of native people's education system and its future development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The education crisis regarding Taiwan's native peoples

The native peoples are the earliest group to occupy Taiwan, and as a result have the longest history on the island. A review of history shows that, up until the beginning of Han Chinese migration to the island, the native peoples were the sole occupants of Taiwan. The colonization of the island by the Dutch and Spanish acted as a catalyst for interaction between the state and native peoples and brought the fate of the two together. It is well documented that the belittling of Bunun culture by early governments and the Christian church led many to abandon the lifestyle of their ancestors, and much of the traditional culture was lost.

Although Taiwan established the "Native People's Education Law" in 1998, the law only stipulates that a native representative must participate in the process of the planning of courses and the editing of text books (Tseng, & Chen, 2013). This has meant that the system of education and educational principles that guide native people's education has been unable to shake off the shackles of government policy makers. As a result, several difficulties have arisen, for example: young native people not accepting their own culture, a fast turnover of teaching staff, and teaching materials that are insufficient to cater to the actual needs of the classroom (Hopkins, Taylor, D'Antoine, & Zubrick, 2012).

Previous research has examined how native people's traditional cultural education, knowledge, and skills can be reworked into structured, systematic courses; it has also investigated how traditional knowledge can be incorporated into modern education systems with planned educational outcomes, with a view to assisting in the education of native peoples while at the same time preserving their culture and averting an education crisis (Abbott, Davison, Moore, & Rubinstein, 2012; Fleras, 2012; Willard 2011).

Such research has suggested the use of scientific methods to assist native peoples without written histories and develop an awareness of, and a framework for, traditional culture. As such, despite lacking written records, native people's traditional cultural knowledge can be organized systematically in order to ensure the successful transmission of their culture.

2.2 The hunting culture of the Bunun

Bunun hunting originates from the pressure of human existence. Living in mountainous forest regions, far from any flat plains, required them to interact with the ecology of the forest and develop a lifestyle, which is dependent on the environment in which they live. The methods of this lifestyle were passed on from generation to generation until it became part of Bunun culture. Hunting is, to the Bunun, an economic venture, while at the same time connected to their belief system. Hunting is viewed as a sacred activity, with preparations for a hunt beginning two or three days prior to the hunt. The night before the hunt, hunters must partake in a "dream vision" in which they are informed as to whether it is an auspicious time to hunt. If what appears in the dream is deemed unlucky and suggests that hunting should not take place, the hunters must listen to the warning; those that disregard the warning and embark on the hunt, risk influencing future hunts and the wellbeing of the tribe (Yu, & Ouyang, 2002). This is an example of the Bunun's veneration of the gods and their respect for nature.

Bunun hunting takes place at set times in accordance with their rites and ceremonies, although it can take place at other times for important tribal events. Ordinarily, during the winter - from December to February - it is generally accepted that hunting should not take place. On the one hand, this is because conditions during this time are not suited to hunting, on the other it affords the animals a chance to reproduce and recover without threat from humans; spring will see the forest provide plenty of prey for all to hunt. Aside from this, hunting does not take place during July, when millet is ready for harvest and clans require their strongest to assist in its gathering. Throughout the year, hunting only takes place between September and December, and March and April. During these times, the Hunting Rite ceremony and the Shooting-the-Ear Festival (*Malahtangia*) also take place. Other hunting events take place during specific occasions, such as marriage, funerals, or celebrations where meat is eaten; hunting on a whim would result in bad luck. During special occasions, elders and shaman pray to the gods before partaking in hunting; the killing of alpha males or females, and of young animals is still forbidden.

Within Bunun hunting culture, the principle of sharing is afforded significant importance. This enables clan members to participate in clan pride and also helps to curb human greed and desire. The Bunun have many hunting myths and legends, the purpose of which are to restrict and inhibit excessive hunting; they are significantly important, much like today's Law for the Protection of Wild Animals.

2.3 Social cognitive theory

According to Bandura's (1977, 1989) social cognitive theory, learning does not simply take place through step-by-step instruction; rather, it also takes place through the observation of others. Social cognitive theory focuses on the interplay between the environment, inner stimuli, and behavior (Bussey, & Bandura, 1999). As the interaction between these factors occurs naturally, people can make an active choice as to the environment in which they live (Bandura, 1989); consequently, incidents within the environment are extremely important factors regarding the learning process of an individual. Alternatively, Swearer, Wang, Berry, & Myers (2014) consider things from the perspective of motivation, stating that individuals partake in certain behaviors as a result of values and meanings derived from behavioral understanding so that certain behaviors are either increased or avoided.

LeVine's (2007) research suggests that learning for children of native peoples occurs, to a high degree, through interaction with their environment. Accordingly, traditional Bunun cultural education must take place within a certain environment, which shows the importance of the role played by the social environment within traditional Bunun cultural education. Therefore, it seems plausible to use social cognitive theory to explain traditional Bunun cultural education. For instance, the Bunun believe that "people" are not a fixed, bounded entity, but rather are constructed relationally. Therefore, those living under the same roof, sharing food together as a family mutually influence each other resulting in their developing similar modes of thinking and personalities (Yang, 2006).

3. Methods

The nature of native people's culture is very diverse; each group has its own unique features. As such, this paper looks at the Pasikau tribe, who are part of the Bunun people that reside in Yanping Village, Taitung, Taiwan. The paper will discuss traditional cultural education, focusing on the most symbolic of the Bunun's hunting traditions.

It is hoped that this research will help provide a systematic view of teaching and teaching content for the future of native people's education.

This research was carried out using participant observation to provide an insider's view on Bunun culture. An important part of participant observation is continued observation of the subject; with regard to this study, the cyclic nature of hunting culture requires that the hunting process often takes place over several months. On top of this, due to the loss of certain elements of traditional culture, or the simplification and irregular carrying out of traditional rites and ceremonies, the authors carried out observations of Pasikau hunting events over an extended period between 2010 and 2013. During this time, they engaged in extended interviews, group discussions, and literature reviews as a way of analyzing their findings in order to produce a reasonable overview of traditional Bunun cultural education.

4. Results and Discussion

Bunun hunter education follows a patriarchal system, and along with myths and legends, suggests a target of natural ecological education with family education at its core and tribal education as its standard (Figure 1). The Bunun place significant emphasis on the idea of the clan. Within hunter education, one of the most important festivals, the Shooting-the-Ear Festival, must be carried out by the patriarchal unit or the members of the same sub-clan; moreover, the millet grain used in the festival can under no circumstances be shared with other patriarchal units as this would result in bad luck and even a disaster for both clans (Yang, 2011). As well as the emphasis on the patriarch, significant importance is placed on the separation of the clans. Therefore, during the teaching and nurturing of the young hunter, the main cultural education unit is that of the family and clan, followed by clan education and finally, the ultimate aim, peaceful coexistence with the natural world.

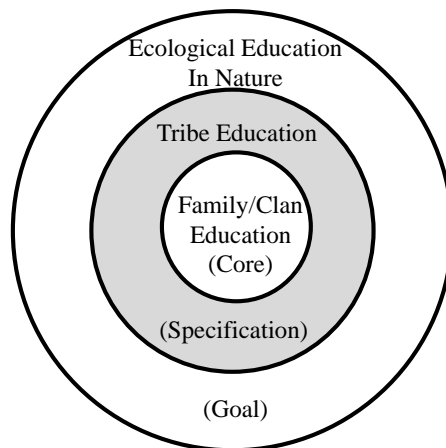


Figure 1: The different layers of Bunun hunter education

4.1 Family education

The Bunun are a tribe consisting of a grouping of different clans, with the concept of “family” or “home” having a unique meaning in their culture. The Bunun believe that a home is not a home until one of the people living in it has died and been buried beneath it (Yeh, 2002). Therefore, what is referred to here as family education refers to the education of pre-pubescent boys and those boys that have already been accepted as “coming of age” by members of the same familial clan.

The Shooting-the-Ear Festival is a good example of the importance of family in Bunun hunting culture as it must be carried out by patriarchs within the sub-clan. If a family gives birth to a son between the last ceremony and the current years Shooting-the-ear Festival then, the morning after the birth, the father must stand outside his home and, at the first call of the rooster, must fire his gun into the air in celebration; this alters the tribe to the fact they now have another male member (Yu, & Ouyang, 2002). From this moment on, the newborn male's hunter education begins with the father and male members of the tribe taking responsibility for his training.

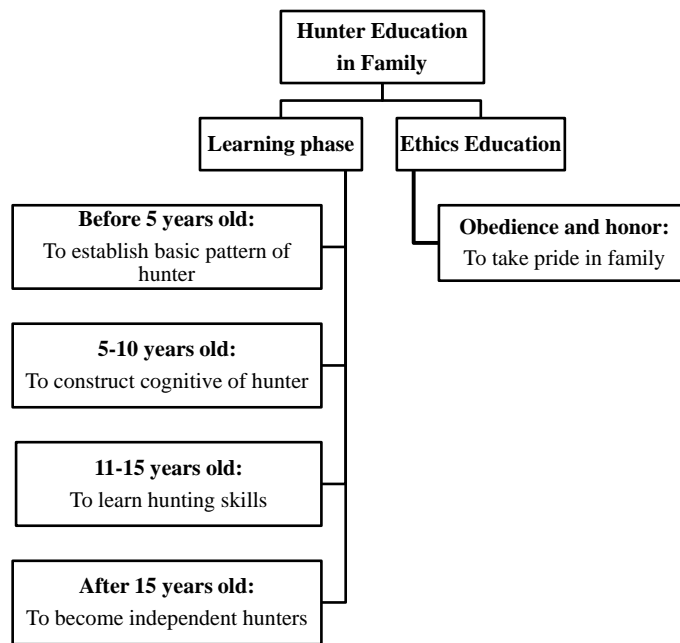


Figure 2: A framework for family education as seen in Bunun hunter education

At the Shooting-the-Ear Festival, young boys shoot the hind legs of sheep, boar, and goats from a distance, using a bow and arrow. When on target, the boy is rewarded with the leg meat of the animal; he will also receive congratulations from other hunters who hope that as an adult he will become an expert hunter (Yang, 2011). This process places the hopes of the tribe on the young boys, and throughout the event the boys observe and learn from the actions of the tribe's best hunters. As Swearer, Wang, Berry, and Myers (2014) argue, the young boys assess the value and meaning behind being a top hunter with the tribe's best as their models; this increases their motivation to continue learning.

The entire process of Bunun hunter education takes place within one familiar clan and can be categorized into two sections: practical learning and ethics (Figure 2). The practical learning section can be subdivided into four parts: 1) Founding of basic skills – up to the age of five, the child plays with other children within the clan, takes part in the Shooting-the-Ear Festival, and observes and copies the hunting techniques of the adults. This allows them to develop the basis for learning hunting techniques. 2) Actual study – from the ages of 5-10 when the children are able to lift heavier objects, they begin to learn real hunting skills and internalize the techniques to being a hunter through participation in athletic events that comprise rites and ceremonies, receiving assistance from adults on how to use hunting equipment, and through mice catching with other aspiring hunters. 3) Building of greater knowledge – from 11-15, while observation of rites and ceremonies continue, clan elders now take the young hunters into the hunting areas during hunting activities for “practical education.” They teach the young hunters the principles and taboos of hunting as well as hunting skills and how to choose prey. 4) Independent study – the Bunu regard the 15 year old as an adult; therefore, after learning the ways of hunting for five years, the young hunters are ready to hunt alone, although they will still set off on hunts with senior clan members as their education must still continue for a while yet. With regards to ethics education, this includes respecting elders and a hierarchy based on seniority, as well as a sense of pride in the clan to which they belong.

4.2 Tribal education

The clan is the smallest organized entity within the Bunun tribe. Clan elders hold a position of influence over all decisions within the clan; at the same time, it is also their responsibility to teach the clan the skills they need to survive. Bunun hunter education takes place through tribal rites and ceremonies, group gatherings where elders pass on hunting skills, and festivals and athletic events where hunters engage in moral and skill based education (Figure 3).

• Religious education

The main event in the Shooting-the-Ear Festival, is to shoot the ear of the hunted animal. The festival is one of much symbolism, and includes the Hunting Rifle ceremony which involves praying for success in hunting over the coming year. As the rifles and bows and arrows are important to the Bunun livelihood, revering them in this way shows the importance of such tools to the Bunun as well as affording the hunters support on a spiritual level and ensuring hunting that takes place over the coming days is successful. It affords the hunter with a formless spiritual energy that supports their survival during the hunt.

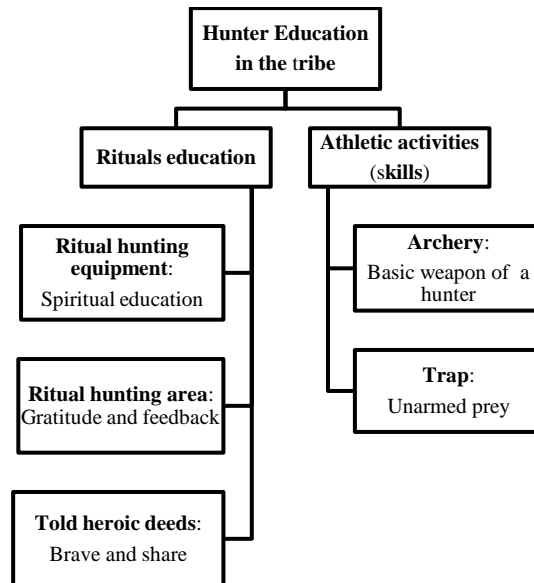


Figure 3: Tribal education framework of the Bunun

Another important within the Shooting-the-Ear Festival is the Telling of Heroic Deeds (*Malastapang*), during which the men gather together in a circle and in a loud, rhythmic voice announce their clan name and their spoils of battle; this involves conveying how they came upon their prey and how they caught it. Aside from showing off one's hunting prowess and raising the profile of one's clan, this ceremony also has significant educational meaning.

When such rites and ceremonies conclude, friends and members of the clan share the spoils of the hunt; nothing is kept purely for the hunters themselves, as within Bunun culture, the clan upholds a principle of "equal sharing for all." As such, ceremonies such as the Shooting-the-Ear Festival offer a chance to teach this principle.

• Athletic/physical events

The Shooting-the-Ear Festival takes place during the part of the year when the millet plants begin to seed; it is intended to spur on the millet's growth (Yang, 2011). It also symbolizes a break in the year's work when the clan can put aside their tools for a while and participate in the festival. In addition, when the Shooting-the-Ear Festival concludes, the clan organizes a variety of physical activities during which time the hunters take the opportunity to guide and teach the children that also take part; this means the children learn the basic concepts of hunting from a young age.

Setalaphruk and Price (2007) state that children learn traditional ecological knowledge through personal experience of work and games and through the observation of adults. The athletic events, which the Bunun children participate in, are like miniature trial runs of forest hunting, although the children usually view them as games. On top of this, within the process of tribal hunting training, as the mode of training is derived mainly through one's own tribal events, such events also serve to establish an acceptance of one's own tribe.

4.3 Nature and ecological education

Within the Bunun beliefs system there is only one God, Dehanin, who is the subject of the clan's prayers and offerings. Dehanin also forms the basis for which the clan's actions are judged (Yang, 2008).

Yu and Ouyang (2002) point out that the Bunun people's concept of God is somewhat ambiguous. According to Bunun legend, many people were turned into animals or plants after angering the gods, until eventually the sun god appeared and taught the Bunun people the rites and ceremonies required to worship the gods. To the Bunun, gods comprise of certain objects that occur in nature, and thus form the beginnings of the Bunun culture.

According to the authors' observations, the Bunun enter the hunting zone with a respectful, cautious attitude, informing the gods of their intentions before they set out, and thanking them for the fruits of their hunting labors as they enter the hunting zone. Throughout the hunting process, hunters carry out their task cautiously so as not to anger the ancestral spirits and the gods that rule the land. Hunters also do not stray outside their allocated hunting zone; they also limit their hunting so as to protect the forest's resources and ensure its continued development.

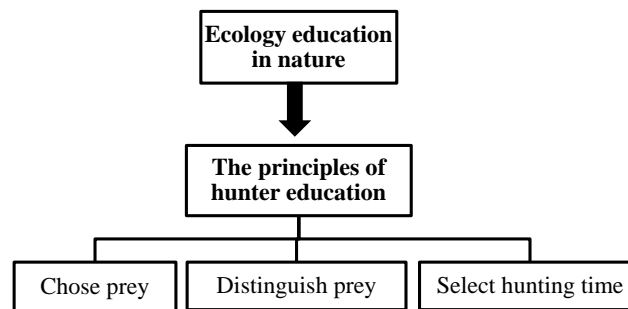


Figure 4: Framework for natural ecological education as seen within the hunter education of the Bunun

The Bunun's staple food is millet; therefore, during the farming season, male clan members join the others tending to the fields. When the millet begins to seed and is ready to harvest, the adult males partake in hunting. Adult members of the clan enter the forest in groups. This is because Bunun hunting can only take place at certain times; they are not permitted to hunt whenever they desire to do so. The Bunun hunting season takes into account the breeding cycles of the forest animals; this is to prevent the killing of breeding animals and to create a relationship of mutual survival with the natural world. This relationship, which involves long-term interaction with the natural world, has resulted in the creation of many taboos. During the education process, adult hunters pass on these principles to the hunter trainees, forming the basis of the Bunun's traditional ecological knowledge (Figure 4). Previous research has shown that native people's faith in traditional ecological knowledge helps increase their happiness and protect natural diversity (McDade et al., 2007; Reyes-García et al., 2008).

5. Conclusion

The education of Bunun principles begins with practical activities such as rites and ceremonies, before being internalized and molded into a working education system. The majority of Bunun education is carried out by the clan, with children observing rites and ceremonies as carried out by their elders within the clan. In this immersive environment, Bunun hunter behavior is passed down to the next generation as they model and learn from their elders. Therefore, this stage can be regarded as one where they "build their basic skills." Ruiz-Mallén, Morsello, Reyes-García, and De Faria (2013) state that when not attending school, the majority of young native people's time is spent observing and modeling the work of adults, learning traditional ecological knowledge and engaging in the preparation of future production. This shows the importance of the learning environment on the transmission of traditional culture. In Bunun society, as a child grows and its strength increases, clan members begin to guide them in the participation of low physicality athletic activities, such as catching mice. When basic skills have been learned, and the child's attitude is right, elders take the children on hunting trips into the forests to observe and develop a true sense of what hunting is about, and to learn the essentials of different kinds of hunting. Previous anthropological studies have pointed out that when pre-adolescent children learn through participating in manual work and activities, their parents are the main teachers (Lozada, Ladio, & Weigandt, 2006). Traditionally, children over the age of 15 are considered independent adults by the Bunun; at this age, clan members take them into the mountains to hunt and allow them to actively participate in hunting so they may develop their hunting experience throughout the year.

The content of Bunun hunter education can be divided into four parts: rites and ceremonies education, physical education, ethics education, and education regarding prey.

Education on rites and ceremonies is an essential part of hunter education and is also a type of spiritual education. Through veneration of hunting weapons and education regarding a clan's specific hunting ground, the continuation of the clan is ensured. The Bunun's ethical education is based on "obedience" and becomes a habitual part of their behavior. Finally, hunter training comprises of prey identification, which includes not only recognizing prey, but also assessing whether or not it is an adult animal, as the killing of a young animal is detrimental to the ecology and sustainability of the hunting zone.

During the Shooting-the-Ear Festival, the Bunun assess the skills of the hunter. Aside from examining the size of captured prey, during the Telling of Heroic Deeds ceremony, the clan also weighs up the hunter's honesty and bravery. In the Shooting-the-Ear Festival, once a hunter has accepted a toast from one of the elders, he must vociferously report on his hunting experiences that day and on the size and type of prey, which he has captured. At the same time, he must speak the name of his clan, to symbolize their honor in having a successful hunter. This assessment is public and is examined together by the clan, so that the inspection of the hunter's success can form the basis for further improvements during the next hunt.

With regard to the value that native peoples place on hunting, Lin (2013) came to an interesting conclusion. She states that the hunting values of Taiwan's native peoples are expressed by the concepts of survival, acceptance, ancestral spirits, ethics, and heroes. Although in recent years greater importance has been placed on the issue of how to fit traditional ecological knowledge into scientific education (Eijck, & Roth, 2007), it is clear that there are significant difficulties in the implementation of native people's values into mainstream education. Therefore, the protection of native people's traditional culture through the process of tribal education continues to be necessary. This paper used methods of observation and in-depth interviews to establish a framework for Bunun hunter education. The authors hope that the construction of this systematic framework will provide a reference for further discussion of native people's cultural education. Due to small differences between the cultures of different Bunun tribes (Yang, 2011), this paper focused on the Pasikau tribe of Yanping village, Taitung, Taiwan with the aim of establishing a systematic framework for their hunter education as a prelude to further research. Potential exists to embark on further research regarding the differences between the hunting education of differing tribes, with the aim to protect the culture of native peoples.

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