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Hunting with the Head: Borneo Villagers Negotiating Exclusivist Religion

Personal processes of epistemological change, by which groups of people move from a more localised to a more universal system of relating to the tangible and the intangible world of the intellect, the imagination, the memory, are rarely accessible to either scholars or teachers in that area of life unreflectively subsumed under 'religion'.¹ Two principle reasons spring to mind: either the collective conversion occurred long ago, and the 'winning' views are documented more favourably than the dissenting; or, where group conversion is recent or even current, access to individuals caught up in the complex process demands more time, more mutual trust, and more knowledge of both the old and the new systems in theory *and* lay practice than is usually to hand. Glossing over the complexity as 'syncretism' is utterly inadequate if that elevates my group's 'intellectually grounded and sophisticated multiple discourses' above that group's 'intellectually challenged and inchoate syncretism'.

A major result of this dearth is that the social, intellectual, and personal struggles at the level of action (which ritual to attend or what ritual act to perform) and the level of thinking (how to make sense of old and new in terms of each other, that being how minds work) are lost, and knowledge of ordinary people's vision is obscured. Our grasp of the living, evolving corpus of negotiated understandings are thereby that much poorer. That may not be seen as a problem if the laity were tabula rasa on which the Word is inscribed by clergy or missionary. Yet as various writers (Stephen Sykes, 1995: 183–92, among others) have made clear, blatant power within churches all too often masquerades as Divine authority, elevating pastors and priests high above all profane believers. Analysis of major change in what is so often seen as the extraordinary and even exotic mission field can thus usefully call in question our understanding of long established ordinary ministry patterns.² This may entail a focus on the

doubts and submerged heterodoxy of church-going clusters, of the pew-shy who may nevertheless reflect on the claims of faith, and on the newly missionised.

There are contexts of religious change where there is no competition between the systems in the one person or group, no single segment seeking hegemony but rather a respectful coexistence of thoughts and acts, with differences reduced to the bare and socially harmonious minimum: food, fiancées and funerals was the simplest cleavage in the particular village of Bakas in Sabah, Malaysia, under discussion here. Apart from a few long settled unreformed Muslims on the village edge, all of whom relate easily to long practised local ways of being a person in the visible and less visible world,³ here called *adat*, the majority are Christian. While the divisions between Muslim and Christian may seem to offer the greater potential for religious negotiation and contest, residential separation, joking and mutually accepting respect generally smooth over glitches. Moreover, all individuals and respective life and death practices are well known and therefore predictable, and while Christians are in the majority within the village boundary, the handful of Bakas Muslims are part of the state and national majority.

The current clash is between the local culturally-informed determination of indigenous people to integrate divergent religious systems, followed when some became Muslim a century ago and continued by the non-Muslim Kadazan when the Anglican mission arrived forty-five years ago, and the increasingly clear demand from one wing of the church for exclusive commitment. This demand fractures community. The early years of the mission were not without tensions between the incoming religion and local *adat* even though these are being forgotten or mythologised in reaction to the current situation. The oldest Anglican mission-priest in the first 1958 conversions who asserted in 2000 that 'I made it clear when people became Christian that they should not do the old rituals, but I did not mind if they continued with them at the edge: our faith is big enough for that', is setting his ministry against the current narrow interpretation, which he rejects. Yet one wonders if the apparent generosity then – in comparison to now – was not unconnected with being spread thinly, for in my direct experience he certainly did forbid the performance of one ritual. There were, moreover, incidents of clothes burning and destruction of heirloom property by priests which, though they pale against the current burnings, indicate a less gentle past but one which was then more evenly balanced by a living local Way.

The church currently demands total and exclusive allegiance to a

particular line of doctrine, with the total extermination of contrary practices and thoughts, the coexistence of 'equal-ranking theologies' being anathema. Those identifying themselves as followers of Christ must either accept the new Christ-only way as it is defined by the Church or risk exclusion from the Eucharist – and given that this is the only village-wide ritual done in public which cools danger, calms fear and creates peace, the risk of exclusion is meaningful. Yet unlike the clear Christian-Muslim categories, the *dramatis personae* of which are known to all, the intra-Christian contestations can be both so nebulous and so socially fraught, labels of allegiance to this or that Christian camp so hidden, revised or reversed according to the day, the audience, the need, that personal interaction among laity is affected on many levels.

A return to the former way of all-embracing *adat*, however, is impossible as only the Christian way is unequivocally respectable in Christian villages – quite apart from most people's wish to identify as and to be Christian and the demise of thoroughly trained female and male ritual leaders. The old way has had a bad press from the church, from young people and from townspeople, and this has been absorbed, albeit with silent bitterness and resentment, by villagers – for who likes to hear they (or their forebears) were devil worshippers, or immoral, or under the sway of witch-doctors and other such ignorant insults: even more bitter, what decent person wishes to hear that their Granny worshipped the Devil (enthusiastically reported by Green, 2000: 106–16). For those few in each village who remain as staunchly 'local' as they can given the near-impossibility of collective and thus fully effective ritual acts, the church demand to eliminate past knowledge is irritating and insulting, the stuff for tipsy rhetoric around the beer pot. But for those who work through the issues intellectually and ritually in both systems, and who see little problem following both ways to the Other⁴ the church threats of exclusion for those going to the 'wrong' ritual represents a real problem, and one which opens up an unsavoury arena for in-fighting and dobbing in at the inter-personal level. And people in this village, as virtually all in the vast region of Insular South-East Asia, always stress the need to mitigate if not eliminate intellectual and interpersonal tension in order to keep the antagonistic chaos lurking beneath the surface of each person and context at bay.

Maintaining calm, keeping balance between all parts of the world, was done until the mid-1960s by demanding that all households contribute to and thereby perform certain rituals. Naturally not all did so with equal interest, equal acceptance, and on those few matters which demonstrably

did not affect others, personal choice and a very strong sense of unique interior individuality reigned. Yet as a consequence of shared residence and of village citizenship, these all-encompassing rules were followed, ultimate sanctions (other than private murder by poison or 'accident') being isolation, expulsion or (very rarely indeed) collectively agreed capital punishment. What anyone *thought* or *believed* about issues legal or 'religious' was of no interest whatsoever, firstly because as a general rule, Kadazan⁵ assume one cannot read thought from action and as a corollary, knowing others' belief⁶ in what is now categorised as the religious arena is unlikely, that being utterly private. What is left (and in this Kadazan are in no way unusual except perhaps in being rational and sparing with speculation) is that action is what counts. And that action was the marker of a villager doing their civic duty.

Now Christianity is the overall bench-mark, the arbiter of 'proper' behaviour and as such has power beyond the church walls. One smaller set of villagers unequivocally accept Christianity as currently taught by the South East Asia Province of the Anglican Church on two key issues: firstly, salvation is through Christ alone and secondly, the local religion was at best a *preparatio evangelia* or, more usually, Devil worship. Either version of the latter point may be used by one and the same priest or follower according to context and audience. There is a strong though far from inevitable tendency for these people to include the rather more educated, travelled and those whose opposition to authoritative figures is less robust.

The second set of Christian villagers – more my concern here – includes those who argue in private for a more inclusive, pluralist line. They have a local grasp of personhood, including equality between male and female, a local manner of relating in daily life and ritual to all visible and less visible beings. This second broad category of self-identifying Christians, in other words, relate to the Word and Building-based Christian discourse in a similar way to that in which village (but not reformed town) Muslims relate to their Word and Building-based Muslim discourse, as a very significant part of their Bakas identity and collective orientation and of their own state-wide identity. One major difference, however, is that while the up-river *imam* assists the resulting collage ritually for *his* faithful, the Bakas priest does not call 'collaging' members of his flock faithful.

AN AGE-OLD ISSUE

That two religions explicitly live side by side, as do Christianity and Islam in the Bakas area, or Christianity and local religion in the case under discussion is not uncommon: less rare than imagined is the 'multiple

belonging' of two religions in the same person. Two disparate religious practices in one person appear in the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5. Abjuring polytheism after being cured of a skin disease, the Syrian converts to Judaism but nevertheless asks permission and is allowed by Elisha on career grounds to go to the House of Rimmon each year with his king to worship (that is, bow down to, do obeisance to, serve) the Syrian Gods. Cothran has neatly shown how John Donne retained his Roman Catholic belief beneath his English Catholic (Anglican) practice over a period of forty years not as pretence or hypocrisy, but a normal pattern of human behaviour and thought (2002). The Olympian Gods of the Roman Empire, such as Zeus, lived alongside both the State Gods of Sabine and Roman origin, such as Vesta and Ceres, and the household Penates of the 'little' but very significant tradition drawn from another entirely different yet uncontested religious background. All three traditions are concisely and lovingly described by Horace, ending with his country woman offering her 'crushed spelt crumb and crackling grain of salt' (3.23).⁷ Even after Constantine, Theodosius's anti-pagan laws from 381–91 had done their best to eliminate Horace's triangle by substituting one state religion, the sources of which were incorrectly said to come from one pure fountain only, the Christian state frequently turned a blind eye to non-Christian practices on the grounds that peasants prevented from following religious patterns which made sense to them made poor tax payers. There were occasional attempts to eliminate non-Christian practices, but their demise was slow indeed. Ravenna in 440 saw the local Catholic Prince taking part in pre-Christian New Year rituals at least 350 years after Ravenna became Christian. While that was much to the anger of the then Bishop, Petrus Chrysologus, (who called it 'outworn sacrilege') he himself was patron saint of Rabies – which the outsider might regard as [equally] non-scriptural (Brown, 1995: 15).

The vicar of my English childhood 'walked the parish boundary' in May; his forerunners would have 'beaten the bounds', originally with a willow wand. It is no longer done. Neither is Christian practice, and nor is the church-blessed 'dressing' of wells in water-short Derbyshire villagers. The 'Gods of Odin's Wood', some thirty miles east of Frankfurt airport, are elegantly harnessed after each Easter dawn Mass by women going to a particular well to collect water for healing, that collected on Resurrection morn having more power than on ordinary days. Such eruptions of the local, the non-Christian, into the Christian, are now conflict-free, but Bede, in both his *History* and his *Life of St Cuthbert*, mentions several past struggles and once a plebeian protest. Take the locals on the banks of the

Wear in mid-seventh century England. Chided by Cuthbert for jeering at monks in difficulty in the river estuary, these stalwart Northerners answered, 'Let not God raise a finger to help them. They have done away with all the old ways of [pagan] worship and now nobody knows what to do' (1983: 47). Those people eventually became as 'fully' Christian as any. The Gods beyond the Limes, as those of the late Roman Empire, were redeployed, representations 'sidling up to each other under the subterranean attraction of deep homologies' as Peter Brown puts it (1995: 13).

While the violent years of mid and late medieval efforts to eliminate rival versions (contemporaneous with the Crusades) led to attacks on Cathars, Lollards, and the various Bible translators, the Elizabethan settlement clearly accepted the existence of two systems, Anglican and Roman Catholic, substituting 'political loyalty for religious duty' (Jones, 2002: 5) exemplified by thrice-yearly attendance at the parish church as a show of civic duty. Such a 'two kingdoms' policy, in which the one person acts out belonging (not believing, which is inaccessible) in two systems of thought, was initially also allowed in Jesuit China, reverencing ancestral tablets and thereby the state being seen as a civic duty by Valignano and Ricci, but outlawed under Clement in 1714,⁸ who went so far as to reject believers who privately abjured any religious motivation before bowing in their capacity as citizens of the Empire (Koschorke, 2001: 176).

Generosity, acceptance that God as Holy Spirit is 'big enough' to manage variation or, perhaps more crucially, accepting that the agent's perspective is relevant (which also means accepting the Other can think) seems to be effective in some contexts but not others, and at some times but not others, and between some religions but not others. While Christianity, or rather Christians, have had to interact with people of the Book or Buddhists and Hindus, all of whom live in rather more similar political and social organisational contexts, with a certain degree of courtesy if not always respect, there has been little credit given to adherents of the myriad local religious systems. Let us look now at this clash between the Christian and the local – sometimes called indigenous – religions in more detail, examining how people fare, how they negotiate their way between the systems in a region where harmony between all people and systems is the highest good,⁹ the most vital aspect of life overriding all others.

THE SABAH CASE

Anglicans have been converting Kadazan, indigenous non-Muslim peoples in the Interior of Sabah, Malaysia, since the British-Sarawak based USPG mission (later Australian CMS) began in 1958, using local, Sarawak

and foreign workers. The first village converts were four youths schooling in town. The arrival of the mission station in the village of Bakas ushered in the conversion of two of the youths' parents, then young people in school, then clusters of adults, then, years later, 'remnants' anxious not to be buried alone in the distant non-Christian graveyard. Major reasons for the conversion of younger people (apart from faith and doctrine) were gaining a (powerful) religion accepted in and transferable to the urban context, and being freed from the restrictions of the local life-way, here called *adat*, against which Christianity could be seen as offering both modernity and freedom. Major obstacles were older people's anxiety about inadequate respect then and in the future for the local world in all its visible and less visible manifestations, especially as these pertain to death. Yet so strong, even inevitable, were the advantages, the anxieties were overcome or set aside, so that within forty years, almost 100% of Bakas was Christian. Now the main conversion focus of both male priests and young, usually female, evangelists is on Anglicans being 're-born', the finding of non-Christian communities or individuals to convert being secondary.

This may sound like 'end of story!' Christians came, saw and conquered the Devil, the forces of Darkness which they must continue to root out and extirpate. Indeed, such metaphors regularly recur in the mission version of the past processes and indeed of the present 're-conversions' – a visiting Sydney Anglican (conservative and exclusivist) remarking he had never heard as many metaphors for power as in two weeks' work for the Sabah Diocese in 2000. But just as the conversion of Europe was not one triumphal and inevitable movement, but a patch work to and fro and a very incomplete process which incorporated much of what it swallowed, as already noted, so too, as I implied at the outset of this paper, can the conversion history of this area be presented from angles which give a very different view and part of a recurring issue. What happens when two intellectual systems clash, in this case Christianity and local religion, when the former insists it has both the authoritative reading of seeing the world and existence in it and beyond and tells the local religionists what their system was? Almost forty years acquaintance with the area enables me to present voices other than the victorious, and to offer some checks against what is already a rewriting of history by all concerned. It may illuminate other contemporary and historical contexts.

THE LOCAL VIEW

Slander, denigration, patronising pats on bowed heads are no way to consider this clash nor, I suggest, is an elegantly EuroAmerican argument

founded on, as the then Cardinal Ratzinger put it in 1985, 'the universal significance of Christian thought as it has evolved in the west' (in Corneille, 2001: 184). Christ was not born in nor is he owned by 'the West' – and to imply otherwise is surely to be guilty of the heretical impiety of preceding the Holy Spirit. Ratzinger's co-religionist, the Belgian Jesuit De Graeve, put it rather differently: 'All authentic religions are valid legitimate social institutions of people who, within their own existential situation, respond in their own way to God's salvific revelation as manifested to them' (in Cornille, 2001: 184). Understanding the other, he says, is to be gained not by caricaturing the other and idealising the Christian version, but comparing like with like. Both the Christian and the local are to be perceived as two religions, not one plus a mish-mash of superstition or, at best, reduced to a (mere) symbolic system, as has often been the case among some missiologists and earlier anthropologists.¹⁰ This view is echoed from the village by Lawa, a fifty year old thinker:

We had an original religion (*agama asli*) before we were Christian, and we had to do the ritual. It wasn't a choice, because we lived in this place, this earth, and must do it out of respect for the spiritual forces here ... Chinese are Buddhist, Malays are Muslim, Europeans are Christian, Kadazan are Kinorongan. We didn't write ours down, they all did, so theirs became bigger and ours not. But ours was equal to theirs.

Lawa is not saying his religion was just a system of symbols (and he is fully aware of what a symbol is¹¹) nor that it was merely a preparation, an inadequate attempt, but an equal intellectually and spiritually viable way of perceiving and living in the visible and less visible world: it is an authentic religion. Along with de Graeve, he sees this as having soteriological power *of itself*, not *despite* itself. De Graeve holds to Christ as unique, as 'the God he reveals', as may Lawa, for he is Christian and is glad to be enfolded by Christ,¹² but neither hold to the place of the church as the only medium for knowing God. Lawa is distant from the Church, while acknowledging Christ, for he quietly refuses to reject the religion of his parents, and loathes the new Christian version being pressed on him in its charismatic fundamentalist version. At times, he and others of his ilk, are plain angry when their turned-in resentment explodes, angry at being marginalised, patronised, told what they are and were by those Kadazan priests more accepting of the official line of their superiors,¹³ by ignorant young people, or both. Christianity which does violence to people, intellectually or physically, should be rejected, says de Graeve, as an act of religious

integrity. Lawa in this view could be seen as living with integrity, rejecting the violent pitting of one system of thought against another. If being accepted demands wiping his knowledge with all its memory, its obligations; demands, in a sense, confessing a new faith which will 'sanctify' his past (see Raef, 1993: 97) at the expense of accepting the church's view of his grandparents' past way, at the expense of their memory and their present (for even though dead they are not gone), then he keeps his dignity and integrity.

Before going further, I'll briefly set out one aspect of the local religion, omitting for time's sake a setting out of the Christian way.

THE LOCAL WAY

A cluster of villages forms one world, within which all relate to the same visible and less visible environment, including living and dead people, plants, trees, animals, etc., all of which have at least one soul – moving creatures having seven. While the spirit of the dead finds union with others atop the highest mountain, souls remain in the region as nameless spiritual owners of the area, *rogon*. A *rogon* is potentially party to every action and even thought of every occupant of the territory. Provided proper respect is paid daily by the correct keeping of all *adat* [life way] rules pertinent to the area, by the maintenance of equity and amity between people, and the requisite gifts at various stages of rice planting, clearing of land for housing, or improper marriages, gifts which reciprocate benefits and acknowledge rights, the *rogon* will not seek to harm a villager, for they are not intrinsically destructive. They take insults as competitive challenges to their status, for they are also Trickster figures, even if the insult was unintended, and the offender may end up dead unless steps are taken to right the wrong. Should the community balance between people and their world be out of kilter because of unexpiated or inadequately expiated wrong-doing within a ritual cluster, spiritual heat (*alasu*) is aroused. This wreaks havoc on people, who sicken and die, and on rice and all green things, which wither or are washed away. It is dealt with by an apology from people to *rogon* signified, as with inter-personal squabbles, by the shedding of blood and sharing of food in the annual monogit ritual for the land. It is now done quietly by a rather small assembly of villagers in some far-distant clearing or house in order not to alert the priest living in Bakas to the performance of the ritual. Yet nearly three quarters of the village give money for the pig and so participate in the action even in absentia. This, and smaller expiating and reconciling rituals during the year, are spoken of badly by all priests as evidence

of weak faith, superstition, and still by some as Devil worship. Juni, a parishioner and one well-grounded in the local way of being a person, sees the issue rather differently. He said firmly in 2000:

I know the *rogon*, the 'spiritual owners of this place' do not make anything, only God does that, and he makes everything. So why can't I respect God in a Kadazan way by killing a pig which He made, for we as Kadazan must respect the spiritual owners of this area according to the way of our grandmothers and grandfathers [*odu-aki*]. That is nothing to do with Syatan: only two bad people here have dealings with him but they are not Christian. But if things carry on like this, with the climate changing, the rains not coming, or the floods too high...the systems are competing rather than cooperating, with each in their own sphere, and the heat is dangerous.

For this man, as for knowledgeable others, the competing of intellectual systems causes heat endangering all embroiled in the resulting discord, for heat means danger. They expect each discourse to have its proper realm, (rather as does Christianity and Islam) respected by the other or, preferably and ultimately, an intertwining of two arms with each clearly discerned. Juni identifies himself as Christian, but is not prepared, or indeed able, to abandon his knowledge of his world in favour of an alien version, although he has, of his own volition, abjured any part of his wide knowledge which could be used to hurt others.¹⁴

Yet according to the church, he is not a 'real' Christian, just a quietly spoken man who lives for his family, his co-villagers, his forebears' teaching, a man there at every party where the drinking threatens to get out of hand, helping at every funeral and doing what needs to be done ritually to keep the balance between the parts of the local world. And a man who asserts he is Christian. Now it may be felt that Paul makes it clear throughout Hebrews or in 1 Corinthians 10 that Juni cannot have it both ways: he must choose either the pig or the Eucharist, accepting Christ's sacrifice as the ultimate and end of all sacrifice. He does. Yet he made clear above that he is not offering a sacrifice to an idol (nor did he ever offer to an idol for there are none) but is honouring God and the local spiritual owners in an act of thankful reciprocity, acknowledging their rights, just as would be the practice between visible people. Clearly, it is possible to argue that in relating courteously to the spiritual owners of the area he is acting inappropriately, for he places them on high, worthy of honour and respect and aware of his actions. Yet he has explicitly said they are less than (a rather distant) God/Kinoringan – as are Christian saints and angels, who

are also asked to bless, to watch over, to advise, to assist, the petitioner.¹⁵ It is possible for anyone, thoroughly Christian or not, to make an idol out of a thing, an aim, or even a doctrine, if the object of worship curtails, blanks off or prevents movement towards and union with the Other. Speaking to a large rock may seem to be talking to an idol, but it is not, but rather to the single spirit (as opposed to the seven in moving things) within the rock *in order* to relate to the overall spiritual owners of that ritual unit.

In the early years, the opposition was more against 'idols' and generalised 'devils', but without threats of exclusion. Now, on the grounds that Christ's death was the final sacrifice, such local rituals are especially opposed as a sign of hubris in ignoring Christ, despite the fact that the Light of Christ, however understood, does indeed relieve anxiety about darkness and the unknown for all villagers. By saying 'however understood', I am not suggesting Bakas's understanding is deficient compared to an imagined 'EuroAmerican' churchgoer: Juni's is not the same as his neighbours and nor is mine or yours the same as that of our respective pew-neighbour. Juni's thoughtful understanding is ignored, for he must be wrong if he opposes the newly authoritative reading of the world: yet this reflecting thinker is not persuaded by the repetition of a 'truth' which essentially ignores his knowledge, attempting to sanctify his past by denigrating his ancestors. He watches the 'cleansing of the devils' from church life and, like Lawa, keeps his distance.

THE 50:50'S

Some village Kadazan accept the new religion, rejecting the old local one for various reasons, some of which are theological.¹⁶ But those who attend Bible study, pray before meals, hold house-church gatherings, and keep away from obviously 'other' ways live in spiritual safety for, with Christ in the heart they are invulnerable to the *rogon*. Others, like Lawa and Juni, accept the new way, are Christian, make sure their children remain Christian, but base their identity solidly in the old, living safely in fully reciprocal regard with the spiritual forces (themselves enfolded in the wider Christian embrace) though, interestingly, not keeping all those myriad rules once enjoined in 'local religion' from which 1958 converts happily if fearfully freed themselves.

There is, however, the category of the '50:50's', who do not have Christ alone in their hearts, for they retain a deep awareness of and respect for the other system but feel following it is wrong in church terms – and they are usually church goers though not involved in house-church, prayer

meetings or prayer before meals. Local feeling is that Christ does not fully protect these '50:50's', and an annoyed *rogon* might well turn his sense of insult at the hubris of humans to punishment. The following two cases illustrate the point.

Pai's only daughter was about to marry in late 2000. Shortly before, Pai found a cobra in the kitchen, quickly calling some men to bring axes and kill it. Her mother Kima was horrified, that snake being special to her dead mother's clan. In her anger and fear, Kima talked and talked about the event, calling to the *rogon* to forgive the killing, and to forget it if they righted the wrong. Pai then became totally afraid not so much because the snake was dead, but because the *rogon* knew her mother, staying in that house, recognised their existence and rights. Armed with that knowledge, the *rogon* would be able to attack any person in the house, each representing all. Given that Pai was ambivalent about some church practice, it could attack her or, worst of all, attack her daughter, especially vulnerable as an engaged person, for despite the fact that she is totally embedded in the Christian way, in matters relating to the spiritual forces the household is the unit. Luckily, Pai's first cousin is an Evangelist. While that hapless woman did not know anything about cobras, she knew when she had to follow her older cousin in banishing *rogon* from the house, despite denying their existence. Other people, lacking a tame Evangelist cousin, are less fortunate.

There is, in this and other villages, a sense of conquest for some as well as defeat for others: both count. Conquest of the past, of the devil, of everything associated, is an increasingly strong – even strident – text in services and sermons, which can have unexpected outcomes. In the effort to force all to dispense with items ever used in religious rituals or shamanic possession, the statement was made in church that even touching them is sin. Unfortunately, an unstable adolescent, totally involved in prayer life and church and with no ties at all to the other way, heard that, remembered touching her late shaman grandmother's shell spirit-callers in her childhood, and went into a downward spiral of paranoia, playing Jesus jingles at full volume, blocking up any gaps in the room decorated with religious pictures and Biblical quotes, not eating and praying loudly for long periods. While the unfortunate girl's state of mind is not unknown in her family tree, and despite the fact that as a total believer she is safe from *rogon* (though she did not know this), her (culturally rather disdainful) mother tried to expel any trace of the long-dead shaman mother-in-law, (whom she had loathed) by burning ancient clothing, brass gongs and other precious heirloom artefacts on the advice of the local priest and

against the wishes of her somewhat despised husband and brother-in-law. The priest came to the house to exorcise the girl. All villagers of the 'Juni' and even the '50:50' type were astounded that the priest and other devout people believed *rogon* lived in the cloth or gong, some seeing that as far too simple an answer to the problem of sickness and misfortune and others as the church admitting the reality and amazing power of a place-based rogon which it had previously denied.

REFLECTIONS

Why do resentful Anglicans not protest as did those early Northumbrians? Some do, by talking sourly amongst themselves or being more likely to become Muslim or get a Muslim son-in-law. But in general, verbal protest is impolite for Kadazan: if the outsider of whatever brand does not know he is behaving like a dog, 'who am *I* to tell him?' But there is also that 'colonisation of the mind' to which Fanon referred 40 years ago: 'who *am* I?' (Fanon, 1964). Attending the ritual in virtual secrecy is in a sense fighting back, knowledge of a forthcoming event being passed round by word of mouth and carefully excluding anyone who might report to the priest as is attending a church initiated ritual but opposing it the whole way through (see Koepping, 2003). But such avoidance is certainly not negotiating a problem between equals.

Yet fighting back, risking enculturation of the Gospel, letting go the EuroAmerican ownership of the Holy Spirit, does occur, and in a 'pig' context, though not in any Christian denomination of this region. For that we must look to the nearby Pacific. There Juni would not be dismissed as an oddment, a pagan denigrate. A similar argument to his is made by the Congregational minister Ama'amalele Tofaeonu in his sharply argued 'Pig of Christ', in which he recounts precisely such use of the pig, wild or domesticated, in church ritual by both Melanesian (and Aboriginal Australian) Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy and laity. He quotes a news note on a ritual to end a land quarrel between Melanesians and nearby Aboriginals of Cape York: 'participants proclaimed their commitment [to the agreement] when the head of the pig, the blood sacrifice was placed on the high altar of the church'. Ama'amalele continues,

Feasting on the sacrificed pigs is, indeed, a participation in the life of the divine ... every member of the community has his or her share of the sacrificed pig. That is certainly the intention of the Christian celebration of the Eucharist, and yet certain of our church traditions reserve more of the elements for ordained priests and entail a pecking order regarding who gets served first.

From the same region, the SVD Philip Gibbs recounts the new movement among the Goilala people of the PNG mountains, a people with a reputation for violence. A re-evangelisation movement, part of a local effort to deal with the high death toll of young men, saw the carrying of a large crucifix from the mountains to the capital, Port Moresby, accompanied by giving up of arms and repentance. The crucifix was decorated with feathers from the bird of paradise, a central item in the local Way. Gibbs notes that 'When someone removed them in Port Moresby, they had to be restored in a ceremony involving the killing of a pig and smearing of the blood on the cross' (1999: 5).

WIDER IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

It is surprising, not only given such evidence of the entrusting of the new faith to the receiving community giving it freedom in the Spirit to grow, embracing and abrading all in its shade, but also the strongly enculturated nature of Christianity from its Middle East and Mediterranean start, that the triumphant globally-centred church is so sure both that its version is right and that the Other must accept the whole package *now*. So much for the amnesia of orthodoxy. Either by chance, design or the state of the human mind in some – arguably most – historical contexts, it has been and is usual to maintain identity, absorb comprehensible aspects of the new way as well as refine the old way over time, a very long time, in the process of finding, shedding, redefining a degree of hybrid wholeness which is never, ever, stationary other than in dreams. The swiftness of communication, the media, means a useful speeding up of the process as far as the converters are concerned: but do not people, might not people, still be as they ever were, slowly moving along, acquiring, dropping, melding? With communication speed can go a level of control which outdoes anything in the past – and what is a boon to some may be a bane to others.

This issue of the including or excluding of a handful of people from each Eucharist, eliminating this or that healing, may seem trivial. Indeed over the next thirty years the ritual for the land involving the pig may well disappear as all deceased grandparents lived and died as Christian, especially if rice is no longer grown. It may endure a little longer – but as a disembodied sop from Kadazan urban politicians to some decorative 'Kadazan culture' – a gesture which makes clear to rural Kadazan, aware of the criteria for adequate performance, just how ignorant the politicians are. Whichever occurs, the reader may well be thinking, 'why bother about a problem – to the small extent to which it exists – which time will solve?'

It is necessary to bother, as I have noted above, for both pragmatic as

well as moral reasons, because resentment over perceived insult or intellectual violence may well reappear in new guise, long after the event or context, unless it is faced up to, the wrong seen, and an honest effort made to reconcile the past with the present. The priest who wishes to exclude does not do that maliciously, or just to show his power: he does it, as I have heard, 'for their [Kadazan or Church] good'. Yet such views easily slip into the moral mine-field reminiscent of Macaulay's worrying dictum: 'When you are the stronger you ought to tolerate me because it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you; for it is my duty to persecute error' (1859: 333–4). And while a priest, and an institutional Church, may both be divinely inspired, both are inseparable from humanly inspired decisions and choices.

Offspring may exercise their own violence in the way of beaten children. I suggest it is not outrageous to relate a portion of the current tension between the Anglican (Chinese) hierarchy in the Province of South-East Asia and the World Anglican Communion to their experience 'under' Europeans, though whether they ape their teachers or fight them I am not entirely sure. Some tension may relate to specifically 'Asian' doctrinal views, though given the scope of 'Asia' and the breadth of views this would be surprising. Yet the most strident critics, of whom the Archbishop is surely the leader, may well have another agenda (which does not nullify the first and is perfectly human) that of fighting against the former bosses. It is believed in Sabah, for example, that a Chinese was rejected for ordination in 1902 solely on ethnic grounds.¹⁷ The attitude of the Europeans then may well have been equally predicated on 'doing good to the Chinese and the Church', though as the vast majority of Sabah Chinese at that time were indentured labourers imported by the British, this would have to be proved. The CMS-run school in Tawau attended by the upper clergy in the early 1960s was run by the mission-Principal with a rod of rattan, as part of 'bringing the Light where there was nothing but darkness'.¹⁸ Such talk (which I heard repeatedly in 1966–7 from him and others) is demeaning for the listener, whether confident Chinese or apparently submissive Kadazan: yet those missionaries, while they horrified me as a teenager, probably 'meant well'.¹⁹ The upper echelons of the hierarchy now are not above scorning Kadazan as, I suggest, they too were scorned. It takes three years extra training for Kadazan priests over Chinese, apparently because the former are 'young in faith', even though all families of Kadazan Anglican priest are Christian, which is not the case for all Chinese Anglican priests. The State election which the part Kadazan political party lost in 1999 was attributed by a church leader to the 'dark

unredeemed side of the Kadazan soul' – rather than government corruption and bribery. Rather than assume this cohort of priests are wilfully harsh without reason, it may be helpful to reflect on past experience of a colonial church.

Of course it is not only Anglicans who can exhibit discourteous tendencies: it is merely this group among whom I have worked, and I want to make clear that this careful examination, which maybe allowed non-Anglicans a self-satisfied smirk, would elicit similar issues in other denominations. Roman Catholics pre-Vatican II were also relentlessly rude, local ritual (such as *monudud*) being defined as 'communicating with the Devil' in the Mill Hill Kadazan – English dictionary (Antonissen, 1956), and they still have their hard-liners as rural Kadazan Catholics define that, although mitigated by a very long time scale for conversion, paucity of priests and use of mature, trained, married villagers working in their own village who thus (quite apart from understanding both worlds) have to negotiate rather than dictate. Outright control is willy nilly rather weak. A young SIB (Borneo Evangelical Church) evangelist on a mission visit to a village near Bakas in 1997 refused a cheerful invitation to climb the ladder to a house with the words: 'I will not come up because "you are drinking the Devil's piss"'.²⁰ One can sit with a Kadazan in town from any interior village and virtually any denomination, and collect a check list of slights based on the stigma of subordination.

This stigma of the old way, this power of the new controllers, means it is not for village Kadazan, as for Archbishop Tutu on getting the Nobel prize, to go publicly to his grandmother's grave to offer thanks by pouring a libation nor, as I have on one occasion, to go to a local granny in Bakas for healing from a local problem. Coming back to the main village with a white striped forehead the day of my departure in early 2001, a group of women said in horror 'the priest will be angry'. 'He's not here, and anyway what else can I do, I can't take this [heat] home with me, and he wouldn't help anyway', I answered. 'True, though old Father P [who did the initial conversion] would have done', was the response. 'You had to do it, but we couldn't.'

Kadazan, in other words, cannot readily discuss the issue, cannot insist they are the authority for the performance of their ritual (Asad, 1994: 63) which, one might think, could be and surely is generously embraced by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12), because the very act of speaking up would mark them as dissidents ripe for exclusion.²¹ Such a transfer of ritual, liturgical, philosophical, legal authority from within to outside is not unusual elsewhere in the present climate of Global Christianity. Be

that as it may, the actuality can be as confusing for and indeed resented by village Kadazan as an imposed political change.

Does the church as an institution own the Spirit, franchising it out to the docile? Is this not an abuse? It would be, it is, easy to label the marking of the reconciling cross with pig's blood as a heresy, or to see the honouring of the local spiritual world with a pig, the whole made by and embedded in God, not as an act of collective cleansing but as idol worship. Easy, but, I would insist, inadequate because such culture-bound simplistic reactions indicate a refusal to accept the other as an intelligent dialogue and Christian *equal* before God. In the long term, the 'problem' will die away, and Kadazan courtesy or avoidance enables the short-term to appear smooth. Yet neither dying away nor avoidance resolves the issue which, as I have implied in discussing the hierarchy of the Anglican Church, may recur in new guise. Looking at the cultural mote in the Other's (the 'New Christians'²²) eye while acquiescing to that in the historical European church has to be seen as a self-deluding act of power.

Juni's particular world, long after the practice ended, is still known best for head-hunting. He and his religious confreres are now rather hunting with the head for an intellectually coherent life in which both systems are intertwined. To use Juni's own metaphor, they are seeking a future in which ideally the two Ways, joined yet distinct, are as clasped hands intertwined from the elbows. Or in which the green leaves on the Christian tree flourish from the Kadazan earth and roots, watered by regular observance – as long as Kadazan wish – of both discourses.

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NOTES

1. I use 'unreflectively' advisedly, for while 'religion' for one people may be a rather discrete segment which may be expected to influence overall behaviour in an undefined manner, for another 'religion' (or that which others so define) is expected to inform every action, view of self and other, choice of food, etiquette and so on day and night.

2. This split of ministry and mission reminds me of the German split of cultural anthropology into 'Volkskunde' – European-based folklore and cultural anthropology – and Völkerkunde, effectively the same among non-Europeans. Thus getting Völkerkunde money to research indigenous Anglicans in Borneo was straightforward, but the equally interesting (and obscure) Lutherans of German origin in Australia came under a different category. 'Mission or ministry' allocation can be equally inadequate and ignorant.

3. Usually called religion – but given that relating to local ways includes the totality of all ways of interacting with the material, personal, less visible world including the unborn and the dead, it is far more than the restricted category religion (agama), which in this context is only a religion when it is no longer that. I have written and am writing extensively on the Muslim communities elsewhere.

4. Now called in both systems 'Kinorangan', with the addition of Tuhan Jesus and the Roh Kudus for Christians, the subtraction of Kinorangan's older sister Sinagundo for adat followers explicitly aping the maleness of religions of the Book.

5. I include Muslim Tidong, Suluk, and Dumpas under the Kadazan label in this sentence: all are from NE Borneo or the adjacent islands, and all share far more, religiously, than the 'Christian-Muslim' labels suggest.

6. 'Belief' is always expressed in the Malay word 'percaya', with the implication of the choice not to believe, there being no equivalent in Kadazan, for whom the less visible just 'is', as is a finger or a banana.

7. 'Not thine with slaughtered flocks and lavish blood

To soothe the great Heaven's insulted majesty:

Enough to crown each little household god

With sprig of myrtle and of rosemary.' Ode 23: p. 213 of Butler's 1929 edition

8. It was quietly reinstated by Pope Pius in 1939, who accepted the civic duty argument.

9. I am not implying here that the value of equanimity and harmony engenders domestic or communal bliss for rural Sabahans: rates of domestic violence are similar to Britain, death through fighting or poison not uncommon. But the expressed values do affect ways interpersonal relations and negotiations.

10. Given that the aim of the anthropologist is to understand the view of the other, I cannot recognise the writing of Kraft and others as anthropology, as he makes the beginners mistake of confusing the domains of scholarship and catechism.

11. In 2000, Lawa recounted the story of a local culture-hero, Dodji, explaining at one point that Dodji took the right path and an imam the left. 'Why was there an imam there?' I asked, in Kadazan. 'To tell us the one taking the left path was an outsider', he answered, then, switching to the English which he had rarely used since leaving primary school in 1972, said, 'he's a symbol' – back to Kadazan – 'for an outsider'.

12. In the sense that now the village is Christian, it is considered safer to walk in the dark than it was twenty years ago as the caring power of Christ keeps negative forces at bay: Lawa explicitly says this.

13. Given that all priests have a long and full education behind them, it follows that almost all rural Kadazan priests boarded school, and thus were away from home knowledge. Some are sons of ritually knowledgeable parents, but such knowledge was denigrated by both the church and frequently the priests in their youth: it is often too late for the entirely ignorant to learn.

14. Villagers all agree that exclusion from the Eucharist of people who retained items used in killing through sorcery is proper, the core essence of the new way being 'love your neighbour and do not injure them as Christ loves you', and such practices being bad in both ways. No one who keeps the items would take the Eucharist, partly because that would lose them their power, and might lead to their death. Communicants tell the tale of the man from a southern river who 'gave in' his items at the request of the priest, took the Eucharist in a dramatic gesture, and promptly died, items he had not turned in being found in his pocket.

15. Interestingly it is only under influence of Christianity that a local religion follower would ask the spiritual owners for specific things – better eyesight, exam success for children – offering a hint with old spectacles or an exercise book: before the giving of the set items was the individual's contribution to the collective benefit, righting the collective balance, and the offering the ritually specific seven ritual items from the natural world.
16. One of the first people to opt out of contributing to the pig purchase (hitherto obligatory) for the annual rebalancing revival of the village was a very thrifty woman: the transfer of hegemony from local to Christian enabled her to do this without penalty.
17. Personal communication by Dean Koh, 1993. Given that the first Chinese of the Diocese of Sarawak and Sabah was ordained in Sarawak in 1881. This seems unlikely even given the different colonial context of the two states: but belief informs attitude and action.
18. The phrase used by Walter Newmarch at the Goulburn (Australia) Conference on South – East Asia in 1975.
19. I taught in Bakas village school from 1966–7, as a VSO and, though Anglican, was not a mission worker: religious issues aside, I drank local beer, danced, paddled a canoe and wore sarong.
20. If the drinking was in the planting or harvesting period, entering without drinking would be an insult and potential source of anxiety: but a courteous refusal to enter would have been accepted.
21. I think it important not to see anxiety and secrecy as just a mission/culture issue. I came across it often when researching among devout Lutherans of German origin in South Australia, who were anxious lest they be excluded from the Eucharist if the pastor knew they did not believe key precepts. As with Kadazan, knowledge of one such exclusion (years ago) is enough to control all who, for whatever reason (salvific, social, familial) do not wish to take that risk.
22. I lived enough years in Australia to be aware that the term 'New Australian' was a pejorative euphemism for immigrants from outwith NW Europe: those now using 'New Christian' in Sabah were schooled and trained by Australians.

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