

“Utux Tmninun U, ini sruwa muway pusu dnui rudan sunan ka hiya”: Reading Naboth’s Refusal (1 Kings 21:3) from the Sediq Mother Tongue

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ABSTRACT

Since the advent of the vernacular Bibles for the Taiwan Indigenous Peoples (TIP), the TIP Christians are privileged to read and hear the Word of God in their ‘ancestral tones’ with familiarity and attachment. Sediq people, the nation the author belongs to, have also been privileged from the publication of the vernacular Bible. Most Sediq people are welcoming this vernacular Bible and feel blessed to use their ancestor’s language to communicate with God. However, the scarcely discussed issues are that the biblical reading and interpretive approaches employed by the Sediq people are distinctive. Namely, Sediq people’s vernacular involves Sediq’s cultural resources-philology, traditional narratives, traditional stories, cultural meanings, traditional philosophies and worldviews-into the interaction with the contents and stories of the vernacular Bible. This paper argues the significance of embracing vernacular as a foundation for biblical reading, how this acceptance shifts the role of the vernacular Bible and how this approach contributes to the contextual, decolonial and postcolonial reflections on the TIP’s land issues by reading 1 Kings 21:3, one of the verses that resonating TIP’s ancestral and cultural wisdom.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the vernacular Bible in Sediq¹ was published and has been used in the Sediq church as of 2012, Sediq people have been empowered and encouraged to read the Bible with the mother tongue.² Most Sediq people are welcoming this vernacular Bible for they feel blessed to use their ancestor’s dialects to communicate with God. However, the scholarly issues scarcely discussed are that the biblical reading approaches that are

¹ Sediq is one of the communities of Taiwan’s Indigenous Peoples or Taiwan-*yuan-chu-ming* in Mandarin.

² Walis Ukan, “Immersing in the voices of the ancestors and the Lord - the translating process of the Sediq Bible (in Mandarin),” http://bstwn.org/BiblicalReview/biblicalreview_2014-p42-47.html [accessed on 10 Oct.2021]; idem., “(The Pulsation of the Spirit for Translating the Vernacular Bible: The Faith Journey in the discourse of translating the Sediq Vernacular Bible) (in Mandarin),” <http://newmsgr.pct.org.tw/Magazine.aspx?strTID=1&strISID=134&strMagID=M2013022203261>. [accessed 10 Oct. 2021]; idem., “God Speaks in TYCM’s Mother-tongues: Reading the Bible from the Tribal Mother-tongues and Tribal Traditions (in Mandarin),” *Yu-shan Theological Journal* 13 (2006): 97-117. See also Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana,” *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 3, no. 4 (2012): 575-79; idem., “The Practice of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics in some Ghanaian Communities: A Case Study of the phrase bny ysɔr’l (Deut. 32:8),” *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics* 1, no. 1 (2015): 134-57.

taken by the Sediq people are distinctive. Namely, Sediq's vernacular hermeneutical process employs Sediq's cultural resources - philology, traditional narratives, traditional stories, cultural meanings, philosophies, and worldviews-into the interaction with the contents and stories of the vernacular Bible. This paper discusses Sediq biblical reading practice and approach by re-reading 1 Kings 21:3 in Sediq mother tongue and investigating how the Sediq cultural and traditional resources influence the way in which Sediq people approach the biblical texts, and how this biblical reading strategy contributes to the contextual, decolonial, postcolonial theological reflections on Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples'³ land issues.

Vernacular Bible and Contextual Theologies

Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah points out that the role of the Bible differs in the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods.⁴ During the precolonial period, the Bible was placed and marginalized alongside other dominant sacred Scriptures.⁵ Transitioned from the precolonial to the colonial period, through translating into vernacular for the purpose of 'proselytizing' and 'civilization', the Bible became one of the dominant tools to suppress and colonize the indigenous peoples.⁶ Yet, undergoing from the colonial period to the postcolonial period, reading the vernacular Bible through the vernacular hermeneutics has surprisingly become one of the resorts to resist colonialism and postcolonialism as well as to retrieve the traditions, cultures, spiritualities, traditional philosophies, epistemologies and worldviews that had been marginalized during colonization.⁷ The Bible, initially a marginalized and a colonial weapon, has been nurtured by the vernacular hermeneutics and transformed, for the indigenous peoples who are still trapped in the neo-colonial, colonial and postcolonial experiences, into a powerful and empowering decolonial means.

Recognizing the significance of retrieving the traditions, cultures, traditional philosophies behind the vernaculars or mother tongues profoundly contributes to the identity-retrieval and contextual reflections of the indigenous peoples. This idea is emphasized by the influential Ghanaian theologian, Kwame Bediako. His ground-breaking argument is that the vernacular Bible is enabling the primal religions of Africa to find a place within Christianity as well as enabling non-Westerners to reform and renew a religion which had become too dependent on Western rational enlightenment. Reading and access to the vernacular Bible enabled Africans to appreciate the realities they face today, to bring the traditional worldviews to underpin the Christian faith, and to come up with the answers to African questions.⁸

It is undoubted that mother-tongue is one of the crucial cultural, ancestral, spiritual and philosophical reservoirs for TIPs and indigenous peoples around the world. Paelabang Danapan, a Pinuyumayan scholar, emphasizes that indigenous mother tongues are collective memories, life experiences, the foundation of history, culture and the existence of TIPs. It is also the intrinsic principles and laws that inform indigenous mental and physical worldviews.⁹ Icyang Parod, an Amis political activist, also advocates that mother-tongues are not only a tool and capability, but also a medium for passing the ancestral, cultural and traditional wisdom as well as an expression of people's dignity.¹⁰ Quoting from Mary Siemen, McCarty and Nicholas state that "language holds our culture, our perspective, our history, and our inheritance. What type of people we

³ Taiwan Indigenous Peoples are referred to as the sixteen officially recognized tribes and other indigenous tribes that have kept their cultural assets and heritage and are seeking recognition. As for the publication of the vernacular Bible in Taiwan, there are at least eight vernacular versions: Amis, Paiwan, Punun, Tayal, Truku, Tao, Rukai and Cou. The version of Seediq Tgdaya (one of the three dialects of the Sediq people) was published in September 2020.

⁴ For Sugirtharajah, the definitions of the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial are based on European expansion over the Third-world. His definition and discussion on the "Third-world"; Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-4.

⁵ Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*, 1-41.

⁶ Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*, 45-73 and 110-39.

⁷ Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*, 74-109 and 175-92.

⁸ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in African: The Renewal of a Non-western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 59-74.

⁹ Paelabang Danapan, *The Ethnic Construction in the Midst of Crack* (in Mandarin) (Taipei: Lian He Wen Xue, 2000), 7-19.

¹⁰ Icyang Parod, *The Road to the Development of the Language of the Indigenous Peoples: The Theory and Practice of the Language Development of the TYCM* (in Mandarin) (Taipei: Council of Indigenous Peoples, 2007).

are, where we came from, what land we claim...all...are based on the language we speak".¹¹ Higgins and Maguire suggest indigenous language and mother-tongue deeply connect with the indigenous identity, self-determination and cultural transmission.¹²

Recognizing the importance of mother-tongue and combining the Sediq vernacular, contextual reflection and decolonial approach, Sediq theologian Walis Ukan proposes a biblical vernacular reading and hermeneutical approach for TIP to reflect upon the underlying colonial, neo-colonial, and postcolonial experiences. Given the fact that TIP's traditional cultures, primal religions have been colonized and exiled within the Christian religion, this marginalization uproots the foundation and identity of TIP as well as deprive its subjectivity. The vernacular reading approach then can be used to reconstruct the true "self" of the TIP and also to decolonize and expel the colonial consciousness, restore cultural, religious, and spiritual traditions. Also, this reading strategy responds to the backdrop of the colonial and postcolonial experiences of the TIP.¹³

To sum up, the transformation of the vernacular Bible and the embrace of the vernacular hermeneutics for the indigenous peoples facilitate the retrieval of the traditions, cultures, epistemologies, worldviews, spiritualities and ancestral stories that have conventionally been marginalized and suppressed. It can also help to dialogue the Christian faith with contextual concerns and issues. Furthermore, vernacular hermeneutics helps the indigenous peoples to recognize the underlying colonial and postcolonial conditions within the contexts.

Naboth's Refusal (1 Kings 21:3): A Short Analysis and Theological Significance

Structurally speaking, the story of the 1 Kgs 21 is part of the broader section of 'the Narrative of Naboth's Judicial Murder (1 Kgs 20:43b-21:29)',¹⁴ of 'Ahab and the conscription of Naboth's vineyard',¹⁵ of 'Naboth versus the King (21:1-16) and Elijah versus Ahab (21:17-29)',¹⁶ 'Elijah's Condemnation of the House of Ahab: 21:1-29'.¹⁷

In terms of redaction history, there are generally two scholarly perspectives that can enrich the notion toward the text, especially with the perception of the land presented in Naboth's refusal (1 Kgs. 21:3): Deuteronomistic History¹⁸ and Holiness Code. In light of Deuteronomistic History, the land is a divine gift by Yahweh to individual clans¹⁹ and with the Holiness Code,²⁰ the land should be kept by the family. Conceptualized by Deuteronomistic History and Holiness Code, the land has its sacredness and divinity and the family who inherit the land should keep the land.

The text analysis for the Naboth's refusal below presents more nuances:

דָּלָ יִתְבָּא תִלְחַנְתָּא יִתְתַּמ הָוְהִימ יֵל הֶלִילָח בְּאַחֲז־לָא תוֹבֵנ רְמֵאוּ

הֶלִילָח, interjective participle, is often rendered as "Far be it!" that expresses a "negative wish or

¹¹ Teresa L. McCarty, "Reclaiming Indigenous Languages: A Reconsideration of the Roles and Responsibilities of School," *Review of Research in Education* 38 (2014): 106.

¹² Noelle Higgins and Gerard Maguire, "Language, Indigenous Peoples, and the Right to Self-Determination," *New England Journal of Public Policy* 31, no. 2 (2019), 1-9, <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol31/iss2/8>.

¹³ Walis Ukan, "God Speaks in TYCM's Mother-tongues: Reading the Bible from the Tribal Mother-tongues and Tribal Traditions (in Mandarin)," *Yu-shan Theological Journal* 13 (2006): 116-17.

¹⁴ Simon J. De Vries, *1 Kings*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. John D. Watts, vol.12 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989), 254-55.

¹⁵ Richard Patterson and Hermann Austel, "1, 2 Kings," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12., ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 23.

¹⁶ Gina Hens-Piazza, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: 1-2 Kings* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 204-11

¹⁷ Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 245-51.

¹⁸ J.M. Miller, "The Fall of the House of Ahab," *Vetus Testamentum* 17 (1967): 312-13 and Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: 2001), 96-100.

¹⁹ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 44-52, Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 87-92.

²⁰ Abraham Malamet, "Mari and the Bible: Some Patterns of Tribal Organization and Institutions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82 (1962): 143-50; K. Baltzer, "Naboth's Weinberg (1 Kön. 21): Der Konflikt zwischen israelitischen und kanaanäischem Bodenrecht," *Wort und Dienst* 8 (1965): 73-68; Jorge V. Pixley, *Biblical Israel: A People's History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 58-9.

rejection”²¹. הָלַלְתָּ, comes from the verbal root , לָלַח, “profane” or “pierce,” and relates to notions of vineyards in Deut. 20:6; 28:30 and Jer. 31:5.²² Its verbal root carries the meaning of ritually (Lev. 21:4), sexually (Lev. 21:9), ceremonially (Ez. 7:21-22). Followed by ל and then נָּ seems to be a type of oath formula (Gen. 44:17; 1 Sam. 12:23; 22:15; 24:7; 24:17; 26:11; 1 Kgs. 21:3; 1 Chr. 11:19; Job 27:5); and polluting, defiling, or violating the honor (Ps 89:40).

הַהוֹיָה, is the word that Naboth invokes to refuse Ahab’s proposal by invoking the name of YHWH. The name of YHWH is preceded by the preposition מִן, which functions as *standpoint* (temporal positioning, place from where an action is undertaken or indicating material from which something is made).²³ Within the oath formula, the preposition, מִן, before the verb can function as explicative²⁴ or estimative.²⁵

אֲבֹתַי תְּלַחֲנֶנּוּ, the inheritance of my fathers, is the most crucial phrase in this verse. תְּלַחֲנֶנּוּ, basically means possession, property and inheritance; the property given by the Lord to Israel (Jud. 20:6; Deut. 4:21; 15:4; 19:10; Isa 58:14); the portion assigned by God (Isa. 54:17; Ps 37:18; 127:3); and the portion or inheritance in the house of our father (Num. 27:7-8). The laws governing Israel’s ‘lease’ over the land can be found in Leviticus 25 in which the Israelites are only the tenants of YHWH’s land, prohibiting them from selling it. Furthermore, the land is represented as a covenantal relationship that dates to YHWH’s covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15 & 17). The main point is the stark contrast between Naboth’s loyalties to the laws and traditions of land and Ahab’s ignorance and greed.

Theologically speaking, Naboth’s refusal contains invaluable insights. Hens-Piazza supports the conflicting perceptions over the land-purchase and land ownership reveals the contrasting ideas of land and identity between Ahab and Naboth. While the land for the kingship is perceived as a purchasable and tradable commodity, Naboth’s refusal is an ancestral past where “it signifies the Lord’s gift: their inheritance, their family identity, and their identity as God’s people”.²⁶ Brueggemann also suggests that Naboth’s harsh reply toward Ahab reveals his abomination toward the idea that his ancestral land is buyable or exchangeable.²⁷ Conroy also regards Naboth’s refusal as his respect and insistence toward the ancient and traditional concept of patrimonial property that the land was distributed from Yahweh.²⁸

What is more meaningful is that this passage evokes numerous indigenous theologians to reflect upon the land issues, colonialism, land dispossession and deprivation of land rights. Tayal Theologian, Yuhaw Piho, incorporates TIP’s land suffering, Christian’s land justice and local churches participation into rereading Naboth’s vineyard and reveals the significance of indigenous witness over God’s blessing and deliverance upon the ancestral lands and calls for land justice and awareness of lingering colonial land policies. He also comments that Naboth’s refusal represents political meaning that is associated with people’s rights and land theologies that are based on awe toward God.²⁹ Gondarra, a Yolngu theologian, resorts to the biblical texts to confront colonialism and suppression.³⁰ His understanding of Naboth’s refusal well corresponds to Aboriginal

²¹ Joüon Paul, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and ed. by T. Muraoka (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993), 105f.

²² Carey E. Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 71-5

²³ Christo H.J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé and Jan J. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 287-88.

²⁴ Ronald J. Williams and John C. Beckman, *William’s Hebrew Syntax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 124.

²⁵ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 117.

²⁶ Hens-Piazza, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: 1-2 Kings*, 206-07,

²⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 257.

²⁸ C. Conroy, *1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings with an Excursus on Davidic Dynasty and Holy City Zion. Old Testament Message, Volume 6* (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983), 191.

²⁹ Yuhaw identifies Naboth’s refusal as being responsible to safeguard the lands and right to life attached to the land. Yuhaw ponders the indigenous (mostly Tayal tribe) land ethics and argues several theological and ethical insights: reading Old Testament stories as a means to appreciate the relationship between TIP and the land, forest environments as the area where indigenous peoples hunters embody the “hunting ethics”, the cycles of four seasons sustain indigenous fellow’s notion and ethics of respecting the land and the heaven, the wisdom of mutualistic symbiosis that supports indigenous intense land identity and the taking land theologies drawn from Naboth’s story as a testimony and witness of indigenous people’s land suffering and environmental exploitation. Yuhaw Piho, “Naboth’s Vineyard and Indigenous Land Ethics (in Mandarin),” *Yushan Theological Journal* 24 (2017): 153-66.

³⁰ Djiniyini Gondarra, “Overcoming the Captivities of the Western Church Context,” in *Cultured Pearl: Australian Readings in Cross-Cultural Theology and Mission* (Melbourne: Victorian Council of Churches, 1986), 176-77.

people’s mistreatment experiences from the white people and dispossession of the ancestral lands.³¹ Revela reads Naboth’s vineyard in the context of the Dalits, where the Dalit’s land rights have frequently been violated by the upper caste, depreciating Dalits to slaves. This social location is then incorporated into a dialogue with Naboth’s story and rereads the story from the Dalit perspective and Dalit Liberative Hermeneutics to derive a biblical response to the present context.³²

To sum up, it is not an exaggeration to argue that the theological significance and political implications within the story of Naboth’s vineyard touches on land issues and land rights that share much more affinity with the land concerns and colonial experiences of TIP. It is the next step that the Sediq mother tongue re-reading approach will be employed to further destabilize the interpretative lenses and hope to produce new contextual and postcolonial reflections.

Rereading the Naboth’s Refusal (1 Kgs 21:3) from Sediq Mother Tongue

Hebrew (WLC)	Hebrew Literal Translation	Sediq ³³	Sediq Literal Translation
<p>הַיְהוָה יֵלְ הַלֵּלָהּ בְּאָחָב־לֵא תוֹכֵן רַמְאִי כְּדָל יִתְבָּא תִלְתַּנ־תָּא יִתְתַּמ</p>	<p>And Naboth replied to Ahab: “far be it for me before YHWH that I should give the inheritance of my ancestors to you”.</p>	<p>Rmngaw Axab ka Naboh: “Utux Tmninun u, ini sruwa muway pusu dnui rudan sunan ka hiya”.</p>	<p>Naboth said to Ahab: “The Lord of weaving, does not allow (us) to give the inheritance of the elders to you”.</p>

Remengo derives from *rngaw*, and can be translated as ‘to say’, ‘to speak’ or ‘to discuss’. Inserting *-m-* becomes the present active verb.³⁴ *Ka* is a preposition that can be translated as “of”, “by”, “with”, “belonging to”, “together with”, which depends on the main verb, context or speaker’s mood.³⁵

YHWH is translated as *Utux Tmninun* in the Sediq Bible. *Utux* can be translated as “god,” “soul,” “spirit,” and “ghost”. *Utux* stems from Sediq’s awe and fear of the supernatural world, non-human spheres, or other spirit-related realms. For the Sediq people, this term must be presented ambiguously and non-precisely so that they would not blaspheme the *Utux* which will incur ominous or unfortunate things. *Tmninun* can be translated as “weaving”. For the Sediq people, weaving is one of the crucial tasks for the women. Women have to learn to take care of the ramie, which is used for weaving, and to engage with a complex procedure for making the hemp rope before women can begin to weave clothes for family members. Men are forbidden to engage in the weaving procedure. Weaving is also a metaphor that associates with sustaining the family and life or rearing the young. *Utux Tmninun*, is then the Highest spirit, god or ghost³⁶ and can literally be translated as “the god of weaving”. *Utux Tmninun* is the most familiar yet awe-inspiring god. It is a serious taboo to discuss *Utux Tmninun*. However, the only occasion that people can talk about is during funeral arrangements. According to the Sediq tradition, during the funeral arrangement, the entire tribal people are not allowed to work and must gather with the bereaved family especially at night. The bereaved family will make a fire not only for heating but also for other people to console them. The fire at this occasion is regarded as a sacred and purified place where the elders can readily remember the bereaved. The elders usually talk like this:

³¹ Gondarra, “Overcoming the Captivities of the Western Church Context,” 177.

³² Jeeva Kumar Ravela, “The Lord Forbid That I Should Give You My Land: ‘Land Rights in 1 Kings 21 and Its Implication to the Land Rights of Dalits,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 43, no. 1 (2011): 133-38.

³³ Here Sediq Toda’s versions are being used. It is one of the three dialects of the Sediq people and still under the translation and edition process.

³⁴ For example: *Rmngaw ku hiya* (I speak to him/ her), *Rmngaw ka bukung paru* (The king commands), *Way rmngaw manu ka dhiya* (What are they whispering?) and *Rmngaw quri uda sapah ka hiya* (He talks about his family).

³⁵ For example: *Tnanak Walis ka sudu nii*. (The grass is mowed by Walis), *Mntuhuy Risaw ka tama na*. (His father is together with Risaw) and *Nima ka rodux nii?* (To whom the chicken belongs?)

³⁶ Sediq people refer to *Utux* as a ghost, spirit or god. The intentional ambiguity for the translation shows Sediq’s awe and staying away from mentioning or talking about the unearthly world and sacred world.

Wada yahan mangal Utux Tmninun ka hiya da.	Utux Tmninun has come to take him/her.
Bitaq hini ka knudus tninun Utux Tmninun da.	The life weaved by Utux Tmninun has been completed.
Wada mtuhuy psliyan utux rudan ta ka hiya da.	He/ She has returned to the house of the spirits of the elders.

It is solemn and awe-inspiring to talk about *Utux Tmninun*. Therefore, since the translation takes *Utux Tmninun*, it suggests that the speaker (Naboth) reminds the listener (Ahab) how sacredness and solemnity of the thing or issue listener (Ahab) proposes. *Ini sruwa* can be translated as ‘unwillingly,’ ‘reluctantly,’ or ‘disapprovingly’. Some sentence usages are:

Ini sruwa ka tama mu.	My father disagrees.
Ini sruwa quri uda nii ka dhiya.	They disagree with this thing.
Ana su huya mnchaya rngaw, ini sruwa ka hiya!	No matter how you try to persuade, he/ she under no circumstances would agree with this!

Mhuway can be translated as ‘to give,’ ‘to grant,’ or ‘to share’. *Mhuway* contains a deep-seated philosophy and wisdom for the Sediq people. For Sediq people, sharing food or belongings with the tribal people is imperative and it is thought that *Utux Tmninun* grants a bonus to the sharers, a traditional law and custom that every Sediq person should observe. Instead of sharing out of abundance, to *muway* is to share out of sufficiency. *Muway* is illustrated when tribal hunters go hunting and get a lot of meat, tribal hunters must *muway* to the tribal people who are ill, weak, disabled, or immobile elders. *Muway* functions to allude that Ahab is greedy to ask Naboth to *muway* his land and even though Ahab has already had abundant lands. According to Sediq tradition, human greed and insatiability are serious taboos and not unforgivable before *Utux Tmninun*. Moreover, concerning the phrase that *ini sruwa* is preceded with *muway* and invoked *Utux Tmninun*, the speaker (Naboth) has already expressed his unwillingness.

Pusu can be translated as ‘foundation,’ ‘root,’ ‘supremacy,’ ‘or the utmost’ and *dnui* as ‘property,’ or ‘inheritance’. Yet, this can be physical (money, food or land) or unphysical (ideas, life experiences, traditional philosophies or wisdom). Moreover, the concept of ownership is quite distinctive. Based on the Sediq philosophy, every belonging, thing, or property on Earth can only belong to a clan, community, or tribe. Individuals cannot decide or arbitrate to whom the things or properties belong. On the contrary, it is the clan, family, community, or tribe that has the power to do that. If someone breaks this law, the perpetrator can no longer inherit these properties or inheritance. Therefore, in this case, Ahab (individual) is not allowed to inherit the Naboth’s land unless Ahab is granted permission from Naboth’s clan, family, or tribe. If Ahab insists in doing that, Ahab will draw himself a ‘debt of blood’ till his death.

Rudan can be translated as ‘old,’ ‘elder,’ or ‘ancestral’. Given the sentence here *pusu dnui rudan*, can be translated as the ancestral inheritance including physical and unphysical properties which are left by the ancestors or the elders. *Sunan* is a respectable pronoun for ‘you’. Yet, *sunan* also connotes that the listener (Ahab) should be cautious.

Syntactical Analysis

Rmngaw (v.) Ahab (object) ka Naboth (subject): “Utux Tmninun (subject) u (aux.)”
 ini (negative term) sruwa (adv.) muway (v.)
 pusu dnui rudan sunan (primary subject) ka hiya (prep.= *Utux Tmninun*)

“Utux Tmninun u...” is a modest clause. It is likely to hear this kind of sentence between children to elders, youth to elders or ordinary persons to authority. Yet, at the same time, the speaker (Naboth) invokes the name of *Utux Tmninun* to express that it is *Utux Tmninun* that makes a decision on Ahab’s proposal. Added *u*, this auxiliary usually helps the speaker to speak readily, courteously yet seriously.

The clause, “ini sruwa muway pusu dnui rudan sunan ka Utux Tmninun”, is a *declarative* and twofold-emphasizing sentence which is plain yet expressive, which highlights the *ini sruwa muway* (far it be) and is

finished with an awe-inspiring *Utux Tmninun*. From the Sediq people's perspective, this clause highlights the mood of being uncompromising and the imperatives to observe the traditional customs and laws toward the *pusu dnui rudan sunan* (ancestral inheritance). Interesting enough, it is valiant yet hazardous to invoke the name of *Utux Tmninun* since Sediq people are absolutely forbidden to speak in the name of *Utux Tmninun*. Probably this rendering here intends to present Naboth's determination.

Epistemologically speaking, it is obvious that the vernacular reading reminds the Sediq people to read the biblical passages with cultural materials, traditions, philosophies, worldviews that have been marginalized, suppressed, and ignored within the biblical reading enterprise. This biblical strategy also helps the Sediq people to contextually dialogue with the biblical texts especially the land issue.

Contextual and Postcolonial Land Reflections

How does this reading strategy effectively contribute to the contextual, decolonial and postcolonial reflection? Some interpretative orientations are proposed.

First, Naboth's attitude of fear toward the Lord demonstrates that his perception of land is rooted in the idea that it was given by God and therefore could not be bought, sold, or even exchanged, at his discretion. This is an overarching aspect that also corresponds to the Sediq people in the re-reading process. For the Sediq people, the land involves a sacred connection with the *Utux Tmninun*. This relationship is also deeply connected between the land, God, human and natural environment. By the current wave of capitalism, commercial interests and neo-colonialism, this crucial concept has been gradually eroded, forgotten and obliterated. Fundamentally, the fear of the Lord, the Highest and *Utux Tmninun* in relation to the land demonstrates the philosophy, spirituality, and worldview that most indigenous retain and it is an invaluable underlying decolonial orientation.

Second, Naboth's attitude of "feeling forbidden" over the exchange for his vineyard echoes the Sediq traditional philosophy when it comes to the land. This forbidden attitude intermingled with a respectful attitude for the Sediq people means that the land must be treated with awe, seeing land as a breeding ground for life, a resource for hunting vegetables and wildlife, space and home for habitat and sustainability. Naturally, the land deserves great respect but mankind on the contrary has taken it for granted. Likewise, as the indigenous people face the colonial and neo-colonial wave, the solemnity, seriousness, and sacredness of the land seem to have been gradually estranged and alienated. Naboth's attitude and Sediq solemnity is the second fundamental decolonial discourse and concept that must be retrieved.

Third, when Naboth refers to what he calls "my ancestral inheritance", it recalls the story and links behind the land and even how the family cultivated the land. Without the ancestors and predecessors, there is no vineyard for Naboth. It is a property that belongs not only to Naboth, but to the Naboth's ancestors and their generations of offspring. This concept also speaks to the traditions and philosophies of the Sediq people, and even a great number of other Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples. When one thinks of their land, they are reminded of how the ancestors cultivated it, how they resisted and faced colonial suppression, how they supported and sustained the family and tribal lifeline. Namely, this ancestral inheritance or heritage must be protected, maintained, and cultivated with care, and it must not be trampled on, denigrated, or even traded at will. The third important underlying decolonial aspect manifests here.

The last decolonial aspect, which is perhaps linked to the previous three, is that the land is the cultural and collective memory of the indigenous peoples. When Naboth resisted the land purchase, exchange, and threats from King Ahab, he embodied a collective memory that reminded Naboth not to disregard his own inherited memory, traditions and culture, and his connection to the land. Naboth even attempted to follow the traditional laws and norms of his ancestors to preserve and respect the land. Likewise, what the indigenous people of Taiwan have experienced in the motherland is a collective memory of a fragmented and destroyed ancestral land, a context and situation that needs to be constantly remembered and retrieved through traditional laws, culture, and norms to value an incessantly colonized world. This is a process that is to reclaim one's personal worldview. The collective memory is not solely monopolized by the Sediq people. Instead, it is shared distinctively and diversely by a great number of indigenous tribes in Taiwan and even to indigenous people around the world. Therefore, the fourth important decolonial aspect entails a collective memory, culture, and

the process of continuous colonization.

CONCLUSION

The paper has discussed the Taiwanese context of and publication of the vernacular Bibles among indigenous communities, taking the Sediq vernacular Bible as an example. While it has been initially an effective colonial tool over the indigenous peoples, the vernacular Bible has been transformed into a repertoire to retrieve traditions, cultures, epistemologies, spiritualities and ancestral stories of the indigenous peoples. Opportunities are given to a dialogue between the Christian faith and contextual concerns to recognize the underlying colonial and postcolonial situations. An example provided here is to re-read Naboth's refusal (1 Kgs 21:3) in Sediq mother-tongue Bible.

Naboth's refusal provides several "counter-narratives" involving conflicting concepts of land ownership, ideas of land, and identity between Ahab and Naboth. More meaningfully, Naboth's story and his refusal resonate among several indigenous theologians. They explore the land justice, indigenous witness, colonial history, colonial land politics, suppression, and land dispossession in the Naboth's story. It is also not exaggerated to argue the theological significance and political implications also speak to the indigenous people of Taiwan. Mother-tongue re-read practice, then, can be employed to destabilize the interpretative lenses and produce new contextual and postcolonial reflections from the perspective of indigenous peoples.

Exploring the philological, philosophical, and syntactical analysis behind the Sediq version of Naboth's refusal (1 Kgs 21:3) derive precious cultural materials, traditions, philosophies, and worldviews that have been conventionally marginalized, suppressed and ignored. These invaluable interpretative outcomes are timely resources for the Sediq people to contextually dialogue with the biblical texts especially the land issue and provide postcolonial land reflections.

Just as a great number of the world's indigenous peoples face multilayered and diversified colonial suppressions, Taiwan's indigenous peoples, with at least sixteen "recognized" communities and others who still fight for recognition, situated in different regions, cultures, histories and contexts with different colonial experiences, it is hoped that this type of biblical reading practice will encourage more indigenous fellows to use their own mother tongues, to critically and contextually reflect on the biblical texts, and to engender more fundamental colonial reflections and narratives in their own contexts.

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