

BUNUN CULTURAL  
& EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION



A brief outline of the history and life of the BCEF  
(English language version)

## INTRODUCTION

The Bunun tribe is one of 14 indigenous tribes in Taiwan, who, when settlers came from China, was pushed back into the mountain regions. In southern Taiwan, near to Taitung, the Bunun tribe live in small villages, and over the centuries have been subsistence farmers with a rich, colourful cultural life.

Many of the Bunun people have warmly embraced the Christian faith, and each morning they gather for prayer at 4.30 am before work in their food gardens.

The late 20<sup>th</sup> and now 21<sup>st</sup> century have seen many challenges and changes to traditional life. Young people are seeking an education and tertiary training, but they face significant challenges in leaving village life for work and study in the big cities. In 1984 the Rev Pai Kwang Sheng, a Bunun Pastor, and his wife Rev Lee Lishwee, began ministry among his people at Yanping Village. The small homes did not allow room for students to study, and Pastor Pai had a vision to build a church which would provide room for study, recreation, worship and accommodation for visitors.

In 1984 a four storey church building was completed with study facilities on the ground floor, a mezzanine floor, worship centre on the third floor, and accommodation for city visitors on the fourth.

A Bunun choir travelled to Taipei and other large cities to perform and raise funds to pay for this new facility, which continues to serve the Bunun people.

## Bunun Cultural and Educational Foundation – History and Mission

It was in 1984 that Pastor Pai Kwang Sheng together with his wife and family returned to his home village of Yanping to minister together with his people.

He had a good understanding of the difficulties aboriginal people have in finding work, and believed that there was only one way to approach this challenge – renew the life of the community.

For the first ten years he and his wife focused on education as a means of reaching out to his people. He conducted classes for the young people, and in addition, each year held study camps for older children where he was assisted by University students.

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In 1992 he also established a kindergarten for pre school children, the first of its kind among aboriginal Taiwanese tribes.

Since 1994 however, Pastor Pai has been looking for a way to revitalize traditional culture, but at the same time seeking to ensure economic viability for any such venture.

Pastor Pai would say, “God gave me a vision which touched my heart”. That vision was to build a Bunun village on land belonging to his father. Supported by the Eden Welfare Foundation, in 1995 the BCEF was launched, a totally new venture among aboriginal people.

The 7-Eleven stores in Taiwan heard about the establishment of BCEF and advertised the cause as well as promoting it. The promotion provided opportunity to make donations through its many stores across Taiwan. Within a short period, 12 million NT was raised, a sufficient budget to begin the construction of the first buildings at the Bunun Foundation.

Since 1995 when the BCEF was established with a staff of one, it has rapidly grown to a current staff of 90 fulltime and 40 part time.

The development of self sustaining industries has been essential to the life of the BCEF, but in addition, the industries have contributed greatly to the pride and dignity of the Bunun people living and working on their own land.

The self esteem of the aboriginal people has been developed through

these self sustaining activities, and Taiwanese people have also been welcome participants.

These activities include a village theatre, hostel, restaurant, coffee shop, weaving shop, conference room, an organic farm with the manufacture of farm products, a convenience store, bamboo factory and the production of oils from cyprus timber.

A riverside nature park, butterfly valley, the Bunun mountains and ecology park, are other features. Furthermore, the BCEF as well as developing local culture and welfare services, has commenced a summer and winter school, established an art gallery, juvenile hunting camp, and created opportunities for theatre camps and discussion of aboriginal art. Older and more frail members of the community, are cared for through the provision of meals and a home maintenance service. There is a confident hope that through pursuing these activities, together with the encouragement of children and young people in further education and training, a future life of stability and growth for these Bunun aboriginal people will be well assured.

## **EDUCATIONAL EMPHASIS**

Since 1984, a school work shop in the summer and winter vacations has been established for elementary and junior high school students, and in the year 2000, these work shops were given the title, Bunun School (gathering for study).

In the ensuing years, more than 100 outstanding young people have attended the Bunun School, resulting in an increasingly higher rate of school attendance. Former students have returned to work in the village and in 1990 through the establishment of a scholarship system, more than 100 students from poorer families have been enabled to continue their education.

## **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Since its establishment in 1995, the BCEF has been totally managed by the local aboriginal people. They have created local industries, a produce farm and other local products and developed a guest house for tourists. These developments have assured a stable income, and support for more than 200 people.

## **SOCIAL WELFARE**

A strong emphasis has been and continues to be the care and respect for older fragile members, enabling a greater quality of life for them. Support and care is offered in domestic violence situations.

## **ART AND CULTURE**

Weaving as a cultural industry has been a great initiative. Through training and the establishment of a weaving shop opportunity for employment has been created.

Since 1998 an aboriginal art festival was commenced with traditional singing and dancing performances locally but also presented internationally.

## **CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

- ◎ Care of the whole community – children, youth, adults, the aged and the handicapped
- ◎ Researching Bunun culture and beliefs, teaching and encouraging their acceptance
- ◎ Further development of the Bunun tribe's social welfare work, job training and counselling
- ◎ Publishing agricultural research
- ◎ Oversight and management of sightseeing and leisure pursuits
- ◎ Preservation of the local environment
- ◎ Creation of a data bank of educational skills, and the further encouragement of aboriginal studies

## **REFLECTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BCEF**

So far the trend of the development of the village has been as a leisure resort centre. A recent Government decision to stimulate tourism entitled *Challenge 2008* has reinforced this trend.

This has resulted in the rekindling of traditional culture among the

elders, and seen amongst the aboriginal people the emergence of unemployed labourers now developing an organic farm, forestry workers guiding treks into the mountains, engineers overseeing village construction and housekeeper wives becoming the backbone of the weaving industry.

Dignity and independence of the Bunun people has been greatly enhanced and they are no longer seen as a burden on society.

In the past subsistence farming was the traditional way of life exchanging what was hunted and harvested. The development of the BCEF with the self sustaining management of local industries has seen a significant change in their way of life and greater emphasis on caring for their vulnerable members.

Traditionally Not for Profit Organizations (NPO) have relied on charity and government services for their existence but in times of economic hardship and the resultant increase in unemployment, Government finances and often cut and NPO struggle for resources.

The BCEF does not rely on any one resource – charitable or Government, but has developed its own self sustaining life.

During the first ten years, the growth of the BCEF, 1995-2005, new approaches have revitalized the life of the community. The next ten years present a further challenge, and the BCEF looks to the wider community and foundation members to ensure its continued development in its beautiful scenic mountain environment.

## **AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE?**

The dream of the BCEF for its second decade is to continue to support the Bunun aboriginal people living and developing as a community on their own land.

Future projects to ensure the continued growth of the BCEF include:

- ⊙ Growth of the farm and the processing of its products
- ⊙ Construction of additional accommodation and the improvement of current facilities.
- ⊙ The encouragement for aboriginal members to train as pastors for

ministry.

- ◎ Construction of a Temperance Centre to offer opportunity for aboriginal people to find new direction and purpose for their lives.
- ◎ Further development of ministry to the aged, in addition to meals, house maintenance and support during hospitalization. Explore the possibility of building facilities for the aged and ministering to their needs while continuing to value their tribal membership.
- ◎ Focus on education for all:
  - ※ offer opportunity for early school leavers to re-enter education.
  - ※ provide education for those with limited intellectual abilities, both aboriginal and Taiwanese.
  - ※ foster opportunities for greater co-operation and unity with the wider community beyond the Bunun tribe.

## **OUR CONFIDENT HOPE**

The BCEF over the first ten years has established a strong foundation upon which to build the future. The dream for the future and the confident hope is:

- A. The creation of job opportunities, protection of the beautiful mountain environment, preservation and development of culture while remaining on aboriginal land
- B. The renewal and communication of aboriginal culture to future generations
- C. The focus on education for children and youth and the opportunity for casual work to enable the development of each individual's potential
- D. The provision of a stimulating environment – life space for early school leavers, and the teaching of survival skills
- E. The provision of scholarships for those from poorer families to encourage the continuation of their education
- F. Further development of ministry to the aged.
- G. The enhancing of communication between Taiwan's aboriginal tribes
- H. The growth of the tourism aspect of the BCEF following

Government policy and pursuing possibilities beyond Taiwan.

## Appendix

The following details the current activities of the BCEF.

### 1.The Village Coffee Shop

Built in 1995 the village coffee shop is one of the earliest buildings and is a must for a visit. Customers would say: “You must go to the Bunun Coffee shop where you sit on chairs at tables made by Eky – a brilliant Amis tribe artist, and from where you can enjoy views of the mountain scenery”. In addition to coffee there are seasonal fruit drinks available, shaved ices, plums, guavas and pineapples.

### 2.Bunun Theatre

This is a very important aspect of our BCEF and children learn the culture through participation with older members. Already the culture has been shared beyond Taiwan in Japan, Canada, the US and Malaysia. It is planned to continue this international exposure.

### 3.Rental Facilities

Prices for meeting rooms and equipment are subject to change. Current prices are available on application.

### 4.Art Activity

Leather craft class	material fee \$200
Weaving class	material fee \$200
Handmade Soap class	material fee \$200
Children singing class	1 hour \$1,600
Dancing class	1 hour \$1600

Guided Bunun history and cultural program: There is no charge for this 40 minute program but a phone reservation is required.

Available times: 9:00-9.30, 15:30-16.00.

### 5.Gift Shop

The Gift Shop displays the Bunun tribe’s classic style of weaving



products using weaving techniques to create products appropriate to modern life.

The Bunun Book Shop gives a history of Taiwanese aboriginal tribes and includes not only books but music, movies, T-shirts etc. Three CD's have been released which include the tribe's traditional eight part harmony.

## 6.Farm Produce

It is recommended that you taste the millet wine and fried peanuts. We especially make bamboo tubes for donations which will support our social welfare program.

## 7.Taiwan Aboriginal Art Centre

This is the first exhibition for Aboriginal artists, but also advertises Bunun art. In the holiday season visiting aboriginal artists perform their art which includes sculpture.

## 8.Bunun Flavor Restaurant

There is a well equipped restaurant with meals available from \$2000 to \$3500.

Bunun Cultural & Educational Foundation  
No 191, 11<sup>th</sup> Neighborhood, Taoyuan Vil, Yanping Township, Taitung County 953, Taiwan R.O.C  
Tel: 00-886-89-561211 Fax: 00-88689-561409

<http://bunun.org.tw>

