

## **SUMMARY OF THE TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL TRIBES TOUR**

**November 24 –December 01, 2007**

Rev. Edward Tannng(陳黃義敏), Rev. Sudu Tada, Joyce I-Chin Chen (陳意青)

The trip consisted of visiting and meeting with eight different local presbytery members of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) from four distinct Taiwanese indigenous tribes in varying regions in Taiwan.

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|----------|-------------------|
| 11.24.07 | Amis Tribe        |
| 11.25.07 | Taroko Tribe      |
| 11.26.07 | Bunun Tribe       |
| 11.27.07 | East Amis Tribe   |
| 11.28.07 | East Paiwan Tribe |
| 11.29.07 | Paiwan Tribe      |
| 11.30.07 | South Bunun Tribe |
| 12.01.07 | Atayal Tribe      |

### **Mission and Primary Issues:**

- Representing NATPA (North American Taiwanese Professor's Association) established in 1980 in Chicago by Taiwanese professors, and their concern for their homeland of Taiwan and the social, economic and political status of the people
- The tour was organized working in conjunction with PCT, Rev. Sudu Tada
- Primary Issues they were asked to address at the meetings:
  1. Current status of the Taiwanese indigenous churches
  2. The condition and quality of life of the Taiwanese indigenous villages
  3. Empowerment and education of the Taiwanese indigenous people
  4. Cultivation of agriculture and traditional arts of the Taiwanese indigenous people
  5. Promotion of evangelism and ministry in Taiwanese indigenous villages
  6. Awareness and concern for Taiwan national affairs by the indigenous people
  7. Concern for the human rights of the Taiwanese indigenous people
- The goal for the trip is to find out what the needs are of the indigenous people and what resources and assistance that can be potentially provided by NATPA in order to address these needs.

Rev. Tannng's Message Key Points (varies with each meeting):

- Rev. Tannng shared his background and education, specializing in communications.
- Concern for the independence and democracy of Taiwan and need to rid it of the Chiang Kai-Shek/KMT stigma
- Need to recognize and promote the human rights of all citizens "ordained by God"
- Hardships and struggles of the Taiwanese people under so many different ruling countries throughout history
- Rev. Tannng attended Tainan Theological Seminary 1961-1964, where he met Dr. Shoki Coe, The freedoms allowed in the seminary were unique for that time period and set a precedent for other institutions and student to pursue the basic human rights and freedoms.
- Brief history of Dr. Shoki Coe - a notable leader who experienced many hardships including exile from Taiwan and having to change his name, first president of the Tainan Theological Seminary after war in 1948. He was a high profile advocate of human rights and publicly outspoken against the repressive KMT government.
- 1972 PCT issued first public statement, at much risk, encouraging the people and requesting the establishment of Taiwan as a new independent nation to the government.

- February 1973 Dr. Coe along with three other well known PCT leaders called a press conference again to publicly appeal to the government to establish a new independent nation of Taiwan, many, including Rev. Tannng were inspired to speak out about this issue.
- Gradual move towards democracy in the government after Chiang Ching-Kuo succeeded and then even greater change with president Lee Teng-Hui
- 1977 PCT's Human Rights Declaration
- Non-recognition of Taiwan in the UN & WHO and its implications
- The critical nature of the upcoming two elections of legislative and executive (presidential) leaders in 2008
- The hope that someday Taiwan can be a free and neutral country, like Switzerland, so its citizens can live in peace
- The Taiwanese indigenous population has suffered some of the most indignities. Though representing a smaller percentage in population, they are as much a part of Taiwan identity as any other people, Hoklo, Hakka, etc, and in fact are the "original" Taiwanese and deserve their full human rights as well.
- The upcoming elections are not so much about electing individuals but supporting the principals of the parties that these individuals represent. A victory by the Blue Party will most likely mean a merger with China and Taiwan losing its independence and human rights to China. Even though President Chen Sui-bian has not necessarily done a good job during his terms in office, we have no choice but to still vote for DPP because it is a vote for independence. It is now a vote for Taiwan versus China.

### **Meeting Summaries:**

**Amis Tribe** - Ji-An Township, Hualien County  
November 24, 2007 2:00 p.m.

The meeting was attended by eight presbytery members and held in the upstairs meeting room of a local restaurant, lunch at the restaurant preceded the meeting.

- Little resources and effort given towards education
- Educational opportunities were not accessible locally, so those who sought education had to go to the cities
- Only within the last 5-6 years the first university for the indigenous was built in Hualien
- Those who leave for educational or employment opportunities do not return to their villages, resulting in the indigenous villages being mainly populated by the elderly and children
- No job opportunities in the villages
- Taiwanese indigenous people have no notion of national government, only concerned with their own communities
- Basics of life, food, shelter, money are their main concerns, not bothered with political issues
- Hierarchy in society still exists with everyone following the chief, including political opinions
- Bribery and brainwashing by the KMT party
- Ignorance and indifference towards politics, but the younger generation is more open, the older (50+) generations prefer status quo
- Need for business and marketing skills in order to profit on their local goods
- Problem of supply and demand, people tend to plant or make all the same things in the same area which drives prices (profits) down—need to diversify their products
- Distrust for the Hoklo people with a history of exploiting the indigenous and deceiving them, a prime example being taking advantage of their land. The Hoklo people offer to build them a house for free in exchange for use of the rest of the land, but then they build four more houses and profit from the land without giving the indigenous people any of the profit.
- Gambling & drinking problems resulting in loss of money and unemployment, further anger and distrust by the indigenous people

**Truku Tribe - Hualien County**  
November 25, 2007

We were unable to hold a formal meeting with many of the members due to a scheduling conflict. Instead we just met with Rev. Micyu, who is the moderator of the Truku Tribe Presbytery at his home.

- How to find fairness and equality among the “plain’s people” and “mountain people”
- Tradition of competition among and within tribes, therefore unable to have unity in church
- Need to educate the indigenous about the benefits of cooperation, business, marketing
- Since those who manage to get an education also leave the village, the villages are left with no fixed incomes and no stability
- Trends in depression and alcoholism
- PCT is naturally a logical organization to lead the efforts to help the indigenous communities due to its established roots and credibility
- Goal is to revitalize the communities and break the harmful vicious cycles they are in

**Bunun Tribe – Do-Kay Township, Hualien County**  
November 26, 2007 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was attended by 13 members of the Bunun Presbytery, held at the office, followed by lunch served at the office. We also had Sunday service with Rev. Suna, pastor of the Ma-Yuan Church.

- Ministry - We were given a printout summary of the status of current ministries, with so many different denominations its hard to increase and sustain membership for PCT
- Social - alcoholism is a major problem, a cycle of unemployment leading to depression and alcoholism and vice versa, problem with respect from children for adults resulting in lack of discipline and concern for their community and traditional culture from the younger generations
- Education - how to educate children and teenagers in order to sustain the church and community, how to provide training and expertise in areas that are needed such as business, agriculture, marketing, land development, etc.
- Agriculture – how to promote and cultivate agricultural products, tea tree oil is such a product that has a lot of potential but not taken advantage of due to lack of business skills
- Land – the issue of protected land, which is much of the land the indigenous people live on, the land is reserved and protected for them, but their ability to profit from it is limited, they can’t sell it and do not have enough money to invest, develop and profit from it
- Cross religion collaboration – the issues is not about church membership, but quality of life so the two main denominations, Catholic and Presbyterian, should strive to work together for the common good of the people, they should not act as competitors
- Politics – there is no trust in the government regardless of which party governs, they feel that they are outsiders no matter what and they have been cheated and taken advantage of by the Holo “plains people”, therefore they have no concept of national identity. They reciprocate the lack of care and concern given to them.
- Economy – hard for them to get loans and financing from banks, results in increasing disparity between the rich and poor, unemployment also a major problem, the problem is not lack of work but lack of jobs with security not sporadic temporary employment
- Continuity – trend of people, especially younger and educated members leaving for more urban areas where there is more work and money
- There are many grants for the Taiwanese indigenous that can be applied for, but there is not enough people who are educated enough to take advantage for all of them
- Overall frustrations with the lack of improvements in these areas even though they are working as hard as they can to change situations, and the poor national economy has instead made things even worse
- Summary of potential areas of assistance: help with business training, development, overall education, bring awareness of injustices to the government

**East Amis Tribe** – Du-lan Church in Taidang  
November 27, 2007 10:00 a.m.

The meeting held at Du-lan church was attended by 16 presbytery members, followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

- History + Politics- older generations will be more supportive of KMT rather than DPP because in their perspective, life was better for them under KMT than the oppressive Japanese rule. KMT allowed them to be educated but also brainwashed them and people are loyal to KMT
- Business – the “plains people” are taking all the profits from the indigenous products because they are not able to sell and market themselves
- Nuclear waste dumping problem, example of Orchid Island, an example of a violation of human rights to the indigenous people
- Migrant workers (cheap labor) are taking away jobs from the indigenous and the government is not doing anything to solve this problem
- Education is not affordable to many indigenous children and the subsidies given by the government are minimal, not enough. Education should be free.
- Tradition and identity being lost, often the government bribe people to adapt more Chinese (or Japanese) customs and practices
- The indigenous people need people to help them, with funding and support, really invest in the people there
- The church is pro-independence, not necessarily promoting any particular party. Are there lessons that we can share from abroad on these issues. US is a country founded on a set of common beliefs of freedom and democracy, yet also divided by varied political beliefs.
- Exchange programs could be very beneficial

**East Paiwan Tribe** – in Gin-lyun, Taimali county  
November 28, 2007 10:00 a.m.

The meeting held at the office was attended by 8 presbytery members, followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

Psalms 85:10-13

“Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.”

- Status of indigenous churches – younger people are leaving for cities so the church population is becoming increasingly majority elderly without enough money to sustain the church, no money to buy land, even church property is rented, so definitely no money to support missions. No loyalty among younger generations who often switch to other denominations and often take family members with them.
- Welfare – 55 yrs of age get \$3000/month, 65 years \$6000/month, but not nearly enough to live off of, on the other hand, subsidies for those who worked in government positions under KMT get much more
- Due to the worsened economy in recent years, the impression is that life was better under KMT government
- Fear of attack by China if Taiwan becomes independent and the indigenous people will be stuck because they have no money to flee to another country
- Many also believe that perhaps unification w/China will bring more prosperity since China has been doing so well economically recently- Rev. Tannng’s response is that progress is not just about economy but an overall quality of life –human rights, education, culture, etc. Economy fluctuates and is a global phenomenon, should not place all the blame on DPP.

- Would like to see abroad ministry training for indigenous people, serve as ambassadors, mission to those at home and other indigenous populations in the world
- Lack of pride and identity among the indigenous because their main concerns are getting by
- Indigenous have no voice in Taiwan, no advocates and representation for them

**Paiwan Tribe** – Zui Mung village, Lai-boh Township in Ping Dong county  
November 29, 2007 10:00 a.m.

The meeting held at the presbytery office is attended by 9 presbytery members, followed by lunch at local restaurant. Meeting is preceded by singing of the Paiwan tribe song to welcome and presentation of several gifts.

- Powerpoint presentation (have a copy in files) overview given by Rev. Cemelesai
- Paiwan is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest tribe
- Many categories of goods and products that has potential to be developed
- Confusion about identity, many children will say they are Chinese, indigenous pride and identity is improving but national identity is still lacking
- Discrimination of the indigenous and mockery of their culture and language, it is important to educate the youth and confront these issues they are facing
- Multiple denominations within on village so it is difficult to increase membership
- Decreasing population due to smaller average nuclear family/lower birthrates
- Need for national events and meetings of PCT in order to bring awareness to the issues, strategize. Southern churches in need of more development, typically northern churches are stronger since evangelizing started in the north, goes back to the history of Dutch missionaries
- South is more heavily influenced by Han culture with larger Buddhist population since the traditional religions of the Paiwan were persecuted
- Concerns about the development and protection of the environment and ecology – example of plans to build nuclear waste plant near the villages (proposed in 2007)
- Previous efforts to help the indigenous are never long-lasting, usually the aide is for appearance sake only
- Ecological problems such as landslides due to deforestation
- Unemployment and migrant workers making this worse
- Conflict between national and local governments, national legislation overrides the local and since the legislators that are supposed to represent the indigenous people are not living up to their responsibilities, essentially there is a lack of representation and laws that aide the indigenous
- Taiwan is working with Japanese economic scholars strategizing on a economic plan until 2025 but the question is whether the indigenous people are considered in this plan or once again neglected
- Important to maintain relationships with friends abroad such as NATPA, interest in exchange programs to promote and encourage continued dialogue and cultivate leaders

Following lunch, we were accompanied by two members to visit a Paiwan bead making workshop with giftshop and café. This is an example of a successful Paiwan business that promotes their cultural arts for profit.

**South Bunun Tribe** – Chin-ho Village, Tao Yuan Township, Kaohsiung county  
November 30, 2007 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was attended by 11 members of the presbytery, followed by lunch at the church. This was the most rural community which we visited on this tour, located in the mountains.

Rev. Tannng starts with a slightly different message for this community that is more rural and impoverished. We are trying to understand how the indigenous people live and the ways in which

they can be helped. There are obvious discrepancies between the way of life among first world and third world countries. God's intention was for humans to share, love and care and have certain rights and freedoms. Today's world there are people who are rich, poor, happy, depressed experiencing all levels of living conditions. Life is not fair and people do not have the rights they deserve. The purpose of this trip is to find out how we can lessen the gap in levels of quality of life of the plains people versus the indigenous people. But it is not about money or material possessions, but about human rights.

Matthew 25: 31-

- This community has a lack of hope for their future and Taiwan since they have done all they can to combat the problems, but nothing has improved.
- Agriculture and water among their biggest problems
- Most of the land they live on is preserved national park land so they are not allowed to grow or harvest from them.
- Conditions continue to get worse especially with the struggling economy and inflation, but no one is showing concern for their well being
- The limited concern and help they receive is inconsistent and for appearances only. There needs to be legislation put in place so that there is continued aide.
- Examples of government neglect of their well being: National park built on indigenous tribal land, building of dams which cause dangerous living conditions in the area
- Betrayal by government and legislators who choose to ignore their protests and instead cooperate with rich developers and businessmen
- Land rights and quality is fundamental to the survival of the tribe. They are cheated out of their land by developers and even their own government, so needs to be environmental preservation efforts and laws put in place.
- They have no voice, anything would help, media coverage needed
- Disconnect between local and national government and therefore no policies can be effectively put in place to help them
- Challenge for church to maintain good communications and relations with those who leave the community for training or education, so that they will feel their responsibility to return
- Hard for church to thrive and grow when people are concerned mostly with the basic needs, elderly and children are the majority population in the churches
- Lack of knowledge to sell products to consumers in Taiwan

### **(A)tayal Tribe**

December 1, 2007 10:00 a.m.

We had dinner with several members of the tribe the evening before. The meeting was attended by 24 members of the presbytery at the office, followed by lunch at a local restaurant. The meeting was preceded by singing and prayer. The large turnout and energy of this group reflects the consensus that the northern churches are much stronger than the south, since this community is located most north among the communities visited on the tour.

- Most of the officers in local churches are KMT since the government opposed the self governing indigenous people, so it is hard to change political views and loyalties, too much political banter and criticizing from both parties makes it hard to choose which to support
- Need to educate and cultivate younger generations who have not been brainwashed by KMT
- Example of church organization that runs and supports orphanages, in this way providing a social service but also an opportunity to educate the young
- Pastors and leaders of the church have to work hard to encourage and educate the people and must make the distinction between their identity as Taiwanese and not Chinese clear
- Many elders oppose bringing politics into church, there needs to be unity in the ideals of PCT before any real change will happen
- Villages are having a hard time selling/profitting from their products

- Voices too small and ignored easily by government, therefore the churches need to unite and those that are stronger (cities/urban) need to help the weaker ones (mountain/rural areas)
- Problem of people leaving for education and training and not returning to their communities with these skills, potential for development of scholarship program that will send people for training and return them to their communities
- Lack of practice putting policies into place in order that the indigenous communities can be self-governing
- How to learn from success indigenous communities abroad, US? Canada?
- Laws that are put in place that are supposed to help and protect the indigenous often end up hindering their growth and success in actuality
- Gaining indigenous support politically comes down to fulfilling their basic needs
- Need for cooperation and unity among every presbytery and church
- Major social issues of alcoholism, unemployment, laziness, selfish behavior
- Inability of different denominations to work together

### **Conclusions + Potential Solutions:**

In order to make Taiwan a truly independent and democratic nation that promotes social justice, the human rights of all its citizens must be met. Even though they are still considered a minority group, only about 2% of the overall population, the indigenous Taiwanese people must not be neglected. Their identities and cultures, which are integral to the overall Taiwanese history and identity, must be acknowledged and promoted. Therefore, assistance should be given in order to empower the indigenous people to become more self-sufficient in their communities. There needs to be more unity among the people of Taiwan. Although each distinct culture and language should be promoted, all the various groups of "Taiwanese" people, from different cultural backgrounds or of different religions, should be able to live and work together in peace. Successful implementation of assistance programs for the indigenous will also have positive national implications. If the indigenous people feel cared for by the people, they will feel like citizens of a nation. A more optimistic group of Taiwanese indigenous will hopefully have a better attitude and concern for the nation as whole, but so far their voices have been neglected by the people and government. In order to really make change and improve conditions, we must plan for the future and not just offer temporary solutions. These communities need to be revitalized and broken from the vicious cycles they are in. The first steps to revitalization are education and support of the indigenous population so that their problems can no longer be ignored by the government.

- Common Problems to Target:
  - Inability to profit from their goods and products
  - Unemployment
  - Alcoholism
  - Lack of education
  - Decreasing population of young and middle aged citizens
  - Land issues
  
- Education + Training through:
  - Workshops/seminars
  - Exchange programs
  - Funding of learning establishments (i.e. schools, community centers, trade training centers)
  
- Goals of education:
  - Foster leadership in the communities
  - Provide skills for self-sustaining communities- (i.e. business, agriculture, marketing, development, advocacy, grant writing)
  - Promote awareness of political and national issues
  
- Seek collaboration with other organizations: NATPA, TAUP, FAPA, etc.