

Establishing new Bunun Aborigines' Tribal and Cultural Identity Design in Taiwan

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Abstract: The Tongpu community is a minority Bunun aborigine tribe located in Jade Mountain area. Due to its location in the national park, the economic development is vulnerable by the impact of national policy, leading to widening gaps between rich and poor, and population exodus, etc. Although this area is rich for its cultural and natural landscape, the Tongpu is reliant on farming, primarily fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, plums, sweet pepper, and tea.

As the design workers, we hope to inspire new creativity and to introduce various products and exclusive images of the Tongpu community, in addition to activating the local industry thus increasing the income of the residents, and enhancing the visibility of the local culture. We aim at empowering Tongpu's aboriginal history, their geography and cultural connotations, to let their voices be heard, in order to create a formative cultural brand name in the near future.

Key words: Cultural Identity Design, Cultural Product, Event Design, Service Design, Bunon Aborigines

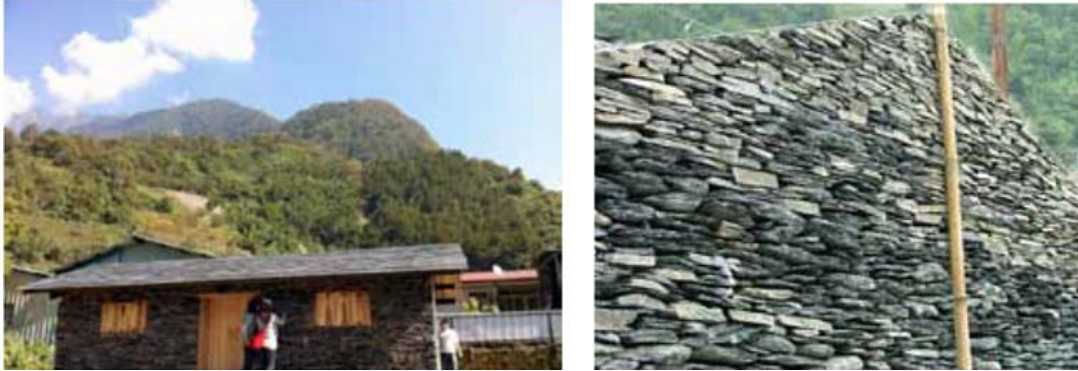
1. Introduction

This research aims to investigate the cultural identity issues of Bunun aborigines. Chris Barker (2000) stresses that cultural identity is a cultural product under certain conditions, which means that people are a social and cultural product. By converting the cultural identity issue into the practical design, we would apply the elements collected in that community into the Tongpu Bunun aborigines Culture Creative Design Project, which was started two years ago. There will be an attempt in Design to illustrate the local elements with cultural characteristics of the site.



The nature resources of Tongpu community, photos from the project

By using the Event Design and Service Design as our research methodologies, we are planning the tribal ecotourism and running the tribal bazaar for attracting the local tourism. It is to hope that the local people will be able to establish their own Tongpu tribal identity by the humanitarian help of external design practitioners. The project includes ecological and industrial features introduced to the visitors; we expect that Tongpu will be an ecological ethics location, with a conservation park of ecological philosophy. The aim is to carry forward the traditions of Bunun culture and increase the tribal economic benefits.



Exploration after the completion of the Stone-board house the construction, photos from the project

This study will extract from Bununs tribal culture identity and symbols, such as tastes, beliefs, attitudes and life style to form a new cultural identity elements of the Bunun tribe. We hope to enhance the visibility of local cultural elements, and to support the image of the Tongpu community.

2. Literature Reviews

The Tongpu community is located in the northwest side of the Yushan national park; residents composed mainly the Bunun tribe. This area is the starting point of hiking trails, for example the Batongguan Cross line created during the Japanese occupation for transporting goods; it is also an important entrance to the park. This area is composed of rich cultural elements and natural landscape; over the years the national park has accumulated considerable research investigation reports about the region; the application of research results and the overall planning and strengthening with the Aborigines partnership is an important issue.



Views and ecotourism of Tongpu community of Bunun aborigines, photos from the project

The subject of this design is to assist the economic revitalization of the Tongpu community, and to promote the development of local industry with Bunun's traditional culture, combining with the national park's ecological features. Therefore, the in-depth investigation and interviews of local cultural elements are important in this

research. By using the cultural commodity and marketing design, we hope to increase the income of local residents, improve their quality of life, and enhance the visibility of the local culture. We hope to extract from cultural elements among the local people's tastes, beliefs, attitudes and life style symbols to represent the cultural identity of the Bunun. By forming these new cultural elements and implications, our aim is to enhance the visibility of local culture, and then to become Tongpu Bunun's imaginative creative brand.

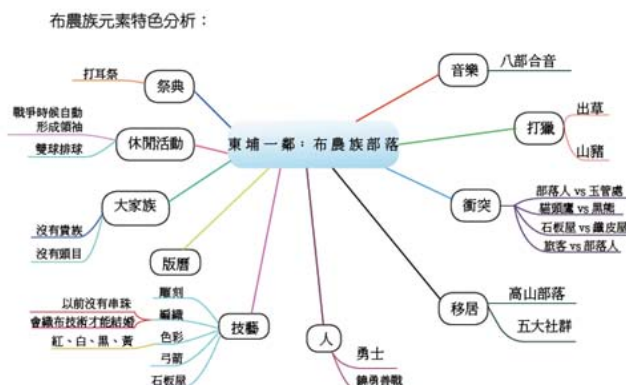


Engraved stone Calendar and sword ceremony of Bunun aborigines, photos from the project

As Barker argues, “being a person and the processes by which we become a person, that is, how we are constituted as subjects” (2000:199-200). Therefore, it is necessary to explore and understand the unique subjectivity of aborigines' history and customs, and the component of their cultural characteristics, before implementing designing for the aborigines' cultural and creative commodity.

According to Chris Barker, the person is subject to where the society inhabits, and thus forms a 'group of relations'. This process, through the formation of their own cognitive self-identity, and the opinions of others and the anticipation, creates the formation of a social identity. Regarding the concept of identity, we will ask ourselves how we perceive ourselves, while others ask how to treat us (2000: 200)? In addition, Hall (1990) argues that cultural identity is not fixed nor a reflection of the essence, but a process of formation of becoming. Cultural identity is formed by a number of differences, and these differences include class, biological sex, gender, age, race, nationality, political status, religion, morality, etc.

3. Methodology and Theories



Mind Mapping of this research and interviews with local people, photos from the project

Xie (1987) asserts that identity is one of the processes of assimilation; and acculturation is in fact the

assimilation. Neither the aborigines' traditional culture lost its authority, nor does the Han culture accept this situation. Thus, aborigine's cultural identities are leading to disorientation, contradictions and conflicts which resulted in young people's learning and social adaptation.

In addition to assimilation, cultural vulnerability faces the policy changes of government, migration of Han to their traditional territories and language education of children from the cultural aspect. Forgetting and assimilation are both the most influential cultural heritage factors facing the biggest challenge of political manipulations or relocation of their administrative division. Aborigines are often the first who accept changes from the authorities as propaganda use of the ethnic groups; because of this they easily put away their original cultural and historical memories.

3.1 Creative thinking steps: KJ Method

Cultural understanding of data collection, interviews with residents, site surveys according to experience design method. Analysis and planning the data collation and compile the questionnaire on discussed issues. Brainstorming on creative concept, and then modifying the sketches to select the design after discussion. Implementation of the 2D/3D modeling, planning the brand image and build the Visual Identity System of Tongpu community, to establish the Bunun aborigines' tribal and cultural identity design.



Engraved stone Calendar of Bunun aborigines, photos from the project

As Liu says, "Taiwan's traditional culture has a great potential for the industrial development"; Zhou also suggests that, "When the cultural depth is enough, then your creativity will makes sense". Therefore, before executing the cultural and creative product design, we must have the in-depth understanding on specific culture. As a result, this study intends to understand the real life of local residents through observation and field interviews for the collecting of cultural and characteristic ethnic elements from Bunun's traditional culture. We hope to extract the in-depth understanding from local aborigines' spirit for the use of creative design elements.

This research intends to use the KJ (Kawakita Jiro) method, by using the brainstorming and creative thinking steps for this project. It is an inductive method, and a combination of analysis method, by the use of processing and integration of different properties data, and applies to the ethnic groups for communication, exchanges in a design research methods. We are using the KJ method for the communication between Bunun aborigines, Yunshan National Park, and School of Design in YunTech, for designing Bunun's cultural and creative design works.

According to the American Marketing Association's definition: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions,

and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2007) . Our plan for brand marketing is based on shaping a spirit brand name of Bunun, designing it to enhance the brand value and to develop an exclusive Bunun’s Culture Creative Industry.

4. Analysis



Bunun Dishes

Bunun Dishes, designed by Ruei-Ming Huang, photo from the project

From the above concept, we should make an effort to understand how the Bununs treated their selves, factors including the language, the environment, space, habits, race, history (especially colonial history). It is crucial to analyze the shaping of Bunun’s self-identity, and its transition into Taiwan's cultural identity.



Belly Cup, designed by Chi-yu Pan, Ya-Wen Huang, Wan-Ting Chang, photos from the project

We hope to extract, through the conduct of this study, from cultural identity among the Bunun tastes, beliefs, attitudes and life style symbols, to form that representing the cultural identity of Bunun, and identifying the new cultural elements and their depth implications. It is to hope to form an important basis, and to enhance the visibility of local culture, for the Tongpu community of the Bunun aborigine tribe.

Movements of cultural identity must be built above the ethnic cognition. This research targeted on Tongpu Bunun aborigines, with the composition of this population from hundreds of years of evolution.

However, several political and environmental changes have made them lose their own language, lifestyle and traditional dependence and the sense of belonging.



Best wishes, designed by Mei-Weng Huang, photos from the project



Ursus thibetanus formosanus clock, designed by Huang-Yao LIN, photos from the project

According to different themes, the production items were distinguished. The students of YunTech designed products for four themes of the Tongpu tribe.

Theme	Creating Content Items	Types of Production	Number
Owl	Tableware, toy, clothing and accessory	Apparel design, product design	7
Picture calendar	Coaster, cutlery	Product design	2



Formosan black bear	Piggy bank, carton packaging, souvenir, clock	Product design, packaging design	4
Other categories	Tableware, accessory, display stand	Apparel design, product design	7

We explore how to combine the aboriginal lives and customs of the Tongpu tribe with design and creation by analyzing cultural elements and designed products. Xiao-ping Zhang (2006) believes that the combination of cultural elements and products can be categorized into two major directions, namely to combine the products with cultural elements and to perform the products by the cultural forms:

1. The culture of the products in the combination with cultural elements has originality and its creativity has completely originality. Under the geographical and regional isolation, the unique culture and life forms of the Bunun tribe in the Tongpu community are reserved and its originality of customs and life is extended to be the basic point of the products.

2. To perform the products by the cultural forms does not mean to use the cultural elements for products but means that the local culture and life forms are just one of the elements that can be used. The focus is on the product uniqueness and creativity. The difference lies in the main idea is in product design and brand concepts with the auxiliary of cultural elements. The creation of the products is just the beginning of design. The cultural customs and storytelling of the Tongpu Aboriginal are then combined as the product orientation and the regional style.

In this study, with two kinds of cultural expressions, the students of YunTech analyze the contents and uniqueness of the Tongpu tribal products with creative design:

	Formosan black bears are applied in the clock design	The calendar cup
Product design		
Local cultural elements	Formosan black bears are endangered species in Taiwan. In the Tongpu tribe, black bears are unwelcome animals in legends and not easily to be seen.	Local residents carve wood for a sign as a calendar to record time.
Design concepts and features	Formosan black bears have V-shaped white hair on their chest. In the clock design, the V-shaped index appears twice a day, representing that the user will meet the Formosan black bear twice a day.	The calendar cup uses the mark carved on the board to label the water amount in the cut, meaning not only the water amount but also the flow of the drinking time.

Presenting forms of cultural products	The existing product is combined with the local culture.	The products are extended with the local customs and culture.
Tongpu tribal cultural uniqueness	Formosan black bears are a unique species in Taiwan. In addition to the Tongpu tribe, they also appear in Taiwan's mountains in records.	The use of the traditional Bunun timing mode has the unique creativity and characteristics of the culture and customs in Tongpu.

In the above analysis, the design of the calendar cup represents the Bunun traditional customs and history links and can be used as a unique creativity of the Tongpu community so as to improve regional characteristics and a high degree of recognition. The clock design of the Formosan black bears uses the existing creative product and the links with local traditional stories of black bears. Because black bears appear in many mountains in Taiwan, they cannot represent the life and culture of the Tongpu community. From the positioning settings of the two designed products, it can be seen in the process of creative design, how the designers were led to position the core of the local culture and thereby perform the tribal features.

Whether in the Tongpu community or the Aboriginal cultural and creative elements all around the world, they do not fit the "Aboriginal image" created by the buyers but should be a talk with the viewer by the cultural and creative works. The soft words belonging to the Aboriginal should be said, as many aborigines use plays and language talking with the culture. Cultural and creative products should present not only physically but mentally, like a conversation between the outsiders and the aboriginal ancestors.

The Bunun aborigines have the self unique emotional needs and ethnic identity at the collective level, and the sense of belonging to the community. It is essential for recognizing their cultural identity, and knowing the difference between the similarities in time, space, environment, and historical process (Guo, 2002).

The use of cultural identity into ethnic evolution could not only acquire the belongingness for the Tongpu community of the Bunun aborigines' sense of belonging, but also a possibility of recovering their original traditional lifestyle records. This can be achieved, for the pursuits of the systematic design and planning the activity patterns in the future.

5. Conclusions

Taiwan's aborigines' cultural development has totally different patterns comparing to the Han Chinese; their differences existed from the real life competition. However, in this nation, we have the same nationality as Han Chinese and aborigines for the fact of living together in this island. In recent years, series of aborigines social movement have evolved, including their 'Name Rectification Campaign', and 'the movement of Give me back my land'.

These are the self-awareness steps. These self-identity processes witness the gradually recover and gaining of the recognition of their people. The majorities of Han Chinese have also gradually learned to be able to respect and appreciate the culture differences among them. Today, these differences turned out to be culture characteristics, and have the potential to become the features of local's cultural commodity design works.

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