

# Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples

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Taiwan is home to sixteen officially **recognized** indigenous tribes that have inhabited the island for thousands of years. These original inhabitants arrived long before Chinese settlers came to the island several centuries ago from mainland China. Scientists believe Taiwan's indigenous peoples are part of the broader **Austronesian** language family that spread across the Pacific. Their languages, customs, and traditions are incredibly diverse, with each tribe maintaining its own unique cultural identity. Taiwan's indigenous peoples represent approximately two percent of the total population but hold immense cultural significance.

Each indigenous tribe has its own distinct language, **customs**, and traditional way of life passed down through generations. The Amis people are the largest tribe and are famous for their Harvest Festival celebrations each summer season. The Atayal tribe is known for traditional facial **tattoos** that once symbolized maturity and accomplishment in their culture. The Paiwan people create stunning woodcarvings and are recognized for their **elaborate** social ranking system and ceremonies. The Bunun tribe is celebrated for their extraordinary eight-part **harmony** singing that has amazed audiences worldwide internationally.

Indigenous festivals are colorful **celebrations** that attract visitors from across Taiwan and around the entire world today. The Amis Harvest Festival features traditional dances where participants hold hands and move in large sweeping circles together. The Saisiyat Pasta'ai ceremony happens only once every two years and involves sacred rituals lasting several nights. During the Bunun Ear-Shooting Festival, young men demonstrate their hunting skills with bows and arrows before crowds. These festivals help preserve ancient traditions while also teaching younger generations about their rich cultural **heritage** proudly.

Modern indigenous communities face significant challenges in **preserving** their languages and traditional knowledge from disappearing entirely. Many younger indigenous people have moved to cities for education and employment opportunities available in urban areas. Several indigenous languages are considered endangered because fewer than one thousand fluent speakers remain in some tribes. The Taiwanese government has established programs to support language **revitalization** and cultural education in schools throughout Taiwan. Television channels and radio stations now broadcast in indigenous languages to help keep these traditions alive and growing.

Taiwan's indigenous peoples have made important **contributions** to the nation's art, music, sports, and cultural landscape overall. Indigenous athletes have excelled in baseball, running, and other sports, bringing pride to their communities and Taiwan. Traditional indigenous music and dance performances are featured at national events and international cultural **exchanges** regularly. The government has also returned some traditional lands and granted indigenous communities greater self-governance rights recently. Recognizing and celebrating indigenous cultures is essential to understanding Taiwan's rich and diverse history and national identity.

## A. Vocabulary

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|-----------------------|---|
| 1. recognized _____   | a. keeping something safe from damage or loss     |
| 2. Austronesian _____ | b. officially accepted or acknowledged            |
| 3. customs _____      | c. permanent designs drawn on the skin            |
| 4. tattoos _____      | d. traditional practices or habits of a group     |
| 5. elaborate _____    | e. musical notes sung together in a pleasing way  |
| 6. harmony _____      | f. the process of bringing something back to life |

7. celebrations \_\_\_\_\_

8. heritage \_\_\_\_\_

9. preserving \_\_\_\_\_

10. revitalization \_\_\_\_\_

g. sharing of ideas or culture between groups

h. a family of languages from the Pacific region

i. the traditions and culture passed down from ancestors

j. detailed and carefully made with many parts

## B. True or False

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1. Taiwan has sixteen officially recognized indigenous tribes. \_\_\_\_
2. Indigenous peoples make up about twenty percent of Taiwan's population. \_\_\_\_
3. The Amis are the largest indigenous tribe in Taiwan. \_\_\_\_
4. The Atayal tribe is known for traditional facial tattoos. \_\_\_\_
5. All indigenous tribes speak the same language. \_\_\_\_
6. The Bunun tribe is famous for eight-part harmony singing. \_\_\_\_
7. No indigenous languages are considered endangered. \_\_\_\_
8. The government has programs to support indigenous languages. \_\_\_\_
9. Indigenous athletes have excelled in various sports. \_\_\_\_

## C. Fill in the Blanks

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**Word Bank:** recognized, customs, elaborate, celebrations, heritage, preserving, contributions

1. Taiwan has sixteen officially \_\_\_\_\_ indigenous tribes.
2. Each tribe has its own distinct language and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The Paiwan people are known for their \_\_\_\_\_ social ranking system.
4. Indigenous festivals are colorful \_\_\_\_\_ that attract visitors.
5. Indigenous peoples have made important \_\_\_\_\_ to Taiwan's culture.

## D. Comprehension Questions

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1. How many officially recognized indigenous tribes are there in Taiwan?
2. What is the Atayal tribe known for?
3. What makes the Bunun tribe's singing special?
4. Why are some indigenous languages considered endangered?
5. What has the government done to support indigenous cultures?

## E. Discussion Questions

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1. Why is it important to preserve indigenous languages and traditions?
2. How can modern technology help protect traditional cultures?
3. What can other countries learn from Taiwan's treatment of indigenous peoples?

# Answer Key

*Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples — Teacher Reference Only*

**A. Vocabulary:** 1-i, 2-j, 3-e, 4-f, 5-b, 6-g, 7-a, 8-h, 9-c, 10-d

**B. True/False:** 1-T, 2-F, 3-T, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T

**C. Fill Blanks:** 1-recognized, 2-customs, 3-elaborate, 4-celebrations, 5-contributions

**D. Comprehension:**

1. Sixteen tribes
2. Traditional facial tattoos
3. Eight-part harmony singing
4. Fewer than 1,000 fluent speakers remain for some
5. Language revitalization programs, TV/radio in indigenous languages, returning traditional lands