



The Gaoshan Ethnic Group

It is said that the Paiwan people are the son of the sun. One day the god of the Sun let an egg-shaped son descend to the mountains of the southern Taiwan and sent one-hundred-pace snake to protect it. Soon the egg was broken and the human being came out of the egg, which was the ancestor of the Paiwan people commemorate the contribution of the one-hundred-pace snake in different ways.

The population and the environment

Numbering 4 461, Gaoshan people in China Mainland mainly live in Fujian, Henan, Guangxi provinces. Ninety-nine percent of Gaoshan People, about 400 000 in total, inhabit in the central mountainous area, the eastern and western plain and Lanyu Island in Taiwan Province. Those areas are divided into thirty “mountainous villages”, which belong to 12 county administrative districts, by the Taiwan authorities.

Enclosed by the ocean, Taiwan has plenty of mountains and the central mountainous spread from the south to the north. The western seaside plains and the mountain-surrounded basin areas serve as the granary and cornucopia of Taiwan. The warm and wet weather in the region belongs to the tropical and subtropical marine climate. There are abundant agricultural, forest and marine resources with biologic resources of the tropics and the subtropics. Hence it is well known as “natural botanical garden”.

The ethnic origin, the ethnic appellation and the language

It is generally believed that the Gaoshan ethnic group has close relation with the Guyue people in the coastland of southeast China. Since the Neolithic age, Guyue People amalgamated with the immigrated Han people from the mainland in the formation of the Gaoshan people with diverse origins and cultures.

From the period of the Three Kingdoms, there have been the recordings in the historical materials in Chinese of Gaoshan people in according to the ancient Taiwan place names, such as Yizhou, Liuqiu, Daoyi, Tumin, etc. In the Ming and the Qing Dynasty, their ethnic names became unified as “Dongfanyiren” or “Fanzu”, which marked the formation of Gaoshan people as an ethnic group.

Gaoshan People claim that they have such branches as Taiya, Saixia, Bunong, Zou, Paiwan, Lukai, Beinan, Amei, Yamei, Gamalan, Daokasi. Every branch has its own language, but no written script.

The resident characteristic—The slate house and the cave-shaped house

The Gaoshans live in plank house, the roof of which is covered by cogon grass. The Gaosgans pay little attention to lighting their houses. The Paiwan people generally live in the house built of stone slabs with stone-slab roof, floor and bed. The eaves are only one meter high. In the villages of the Amei, the Paiwan and



the Zou people, there is often an assembly place built with planks and rattan, which serves as a working place at daytime and at night a public place of entertainment for single men. And most of village meetings and memorial ceremonies are held here.

The costume characteristics—The abundant body decorations

There are great differences among the costumes of different groups of the Gaoshan people. The clothes of Taiya and Saixia people are usually made of linen and cotton. Both men and women wear cape, waistcoat and trousers, and they put on puttee while working. The Bunong and Cao people wear leather sleeveless jacket, chest clothing and belly cover and puttee, and they wrap up their heads with cloth. The Paiwan men used to wear mandarian-like jacket, cape and apron, while the women wear longer skirts. The Yamei men generally wear their heads with cloth and they wear small jacket and trousers, and women also have sleeveless jacket and apron.

The Gaoshan people have the custom of body decoration. They remove the armpit hair in youth. The Taiya, Bunong, Saixia and Zou people pull out the tooth in the grown-up ritual. However, Paiwan, Lukai, Beinan, Amei, and Yamei people dye their teeth in the ritual. The Amei and Bunong women all have their earlobes pierced. And the Zous usually bind up their belly. Generally the Gaoshan people have the tradition of tattooing face and body.

The dietetic habits—Drinking, smoking and eating areca nut

The Gaoshan people have three meals everyday and take rice as the staple food in the plain area. They eat fish, shrimp and shellfish. However, in the mountainous areas they usually eat millet, taro and sweet potato. The vegetables include bean, pumpkin and bamboo shoots. In the seaside areas, fish, shrimp and shellfish make up the staple food. Except the Yamei people, all the Gaoshans love to drink and smoke. And adult Amei and Paiwan people like to chew areca nuts.



The Dancing—The chu dance

The Gaoshan people are great dancers and singers, and their group dance is famous for its splendid scene. The well-known dances include Swing Hair Dance of the Tamei girls, Chu Dance, which is popular in the Wulai Mountainous region and the Sun Moon Pond, and “Damao Dance” that the Saixia people perform during the memorial ceremonies.

The Gaoshan people’s major musical instruments include month organ, bamboo flute, nose flute, Chu, bamboo drum, leg and waist bell. They also use some Han people’s musical instruments, such as big drum and bronze gong during the festivals.

The arts and crafts—The snake-shaped pattern of decoration

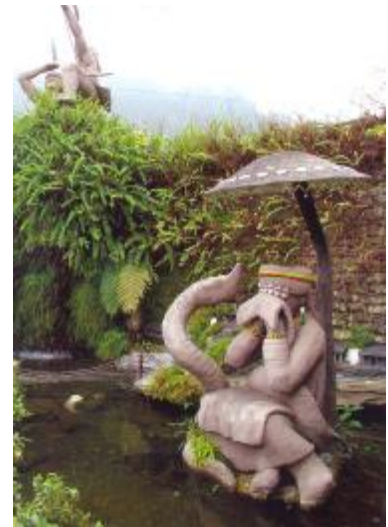
The painting and sculpture of the Gaoshan people stress utility and they usually paint or sculpt on the daily-used stuffs. They often engrave snake and net pattern on vase, bottle, vat, pipe, bowl and cup. The Paiwan people like to engrave human figures, animals and flowers on the

earrings, pipes, scabbards, handle of the knife, musical instruments, thresholds, doorposts and lintels. The Yamei people love to carve human figures and geometry patterns on both sides of their ships.

The Gaoshan women are experts in sewing. They generally love to embroider triangle, quadrangle, straight grain, horizontal line and diagonal line on clothing, trousers, apron and headband.

The religion—The frequent sacrifices

The Gaoshans are animalists who believe in immortality and ancestor worship. They believe that when people die, their soul will not disappear and their ancestors' soul will protect them. They also think that there are evil spirit and kind spirit, and if they sacrifice to the good spirit, they can be blessed. So in the past, sacrifices were frequently held in the Gaoshan villages. In plain areas, there are harvest sacrifice, seeding sacrifice and helminthicide sacrifice and in mountainous and seaside areas, there are not only harvest sacrifice and seeding sacrifice, but also fishing sacrifice and hunting sacrifice. Among them, the harvest sacrifice, also called ancestor sacrifice or five-year sacrifice in other places, is the greatest one.



The festival customs—The combination of festivals and sacrifices

The festival cultures of the Gaoshan people are rich and colorful. In addition to the festivals of the Han people that the Pingpu people accepted they have preserved some traditional festivals, such as the Festival of Praying for New Year, the Seeding Festival, the Harvest Festival and the New Year Sacrifice. The Paiwan people usually hold grand activities during grown-up ritual, wedding and funeral. Among them, the Five-Year Sacrifice during the grown-up ritual is the grandest. The Moon Sacrifice is the

Bunong people's major festival. The Yamei people' traditional festival has close relation with the fishery production, therefore the Fishing Sacrifice become the ethnic festivals at the same time. The Saixia people's conventional festivals include the Farming Sacrifice, the Ancestor Sacrifice and the Short Spirit Sacrifice, the last one of which is held every two years as the most distinctive one.