



Introduction



There are many ethnic groups living on the beautiful island of Taiwan. Among them are 430,000 indigenous status persons, which is about 1.9% of the total population. Although the number is relatively small, they perform superbly well in music, culture, and sports endeavors. The name "YUAN CHU MIN" in fact is a collective term. It includes

Atayal, Saisiyat, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai, Paiwan, Puyuma, Amis, Yami, Thao, Kavalan, Truku and Sakizaya, to make up the thirteen indigenous tribes of Taiwan.

Austronesia Language Family and Taiwan Indigenous Peoples

Since the Paleolithic Age, the earliest inhabitants in Taiwan were the Austronesians. Academic research found that there were once more than 20 aboriginal tribes living in Taiwan and all belonged to the Austronesian family. Some scholars even concluded that Taiwan might be one of the original homelands of the Austronesians. Currently, twelve of the Austroneisan peoples are recognized by the government. They are Atayal, Saisiyat, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai, Paiwan, Puyuma, Amis, Yami, Thao, Kavalan, Truku and Sakizaya.

Amis

The area of Amis distribution stretches along plains around Mt. Chi-lai in North Hualien, the long and narrow seacoast plains and the hilly lands in Taitung, Pingtung and Hengtsuen Peninsula. At present, the population is about 158,000. The traditional social organization is based mainly on the matrilineal clans. After getting married, the male must move into the female's residence. Family affairs including finance of the family are decided by the female householder. The affairs of marriage or the allocation of wealth should be decided in a meeting hosted by the uncles of the female householder.



Amis Distribution



The public affairs about tribal politics, laws, wars, and religions are dealt with by an institution consisting of males of age grades. The most important traditional ceremony is the Harvest Festival to celebrate the males entering the new age of manhood.

Atayal

Atayal is traditionally located in the mid-northern mountain areas of Taiwan, including the northern part from Puli to Hualien. At present, the population is approximately 76,000. Hunting and farming are their traditional life style. Their fabric weaving skill feature sophisticated patterns and designs. Red color symbolizes blood, which is vital and can keep away from the evils. Face tattoos are Atayal long standing customs.



Atayal Distribution



Ancestral worship groups constitute the major social organization.

Ancestor worship rituals are the prominent religious ceremony. Gan mouth string playing and dancing are the distinctive features of Atayal entertaining activities.

Paiwan

Paiwan tribe scattered from north to Dawu Mountain, south to Henchung, west to Fangliao and east to Taimali of Taitung, on both sides of the Central Mountain Ranges. There are nearly 79,000 Paiwan people. The noble chief in each tribe is at the same time the leader in politics, military and even religion. Each clan works as an independent and autonomous



unit. As Paiwan tribe has a large population and the blood relationship is widely spread, the alliance between close relatives is prevailing among the nobles. In some areas a noble chief leads a big clan combined with several families. Colorful glazed beads, iron utensils and silvery are

valuable things. The hundred-step snake and the human-headed designs on pottery urns and pots and the roof beams symbolize the superior status of the nobles.



Paiwan Distribution

Bunun

They are scattered widely around San-min Village of Kaohsiung County, Hairi Village of Taitung County as well as Nantou County. Bunun tribe can be found in the areas of Central Mountains with average height of 1,000 to 2,000 meters. Their society is maintained mainly by patriarchal social structure. And non-blood relatives are accepted as



normal family members. That is also the reason why Bunun traditional family residence is pretty large in size. Ceremonies are scheduled according to millet planting, weeding and harvest. "Praying for a Millet Harvest," being famous with the outstanding eight parts harmony is sung by Bunun people after weeding. "Manah Tainga" is considered as an important life ceremony for manhood.



Bunun Distribution

Puyuma



Puyuma Tribe builds their homes in the south of Taitung Longitudinal. Puyuma tribe has dominated 72 groups at its most. At present, the population is about 9200. The entire Puyuma tribe may be divided into eight sub-tribes to be called as Pa-Sher-Fan. These groups have different legends. It is the Beinan groups were born from bamboo and the Jiben groups were born from stone. The main traditional social organization is maintained by two systems: one is the family system charged and inherited by the eldest daughter, and the other is organized by different ages of males. Men House is the political center and education place for the males. Before getting married, they accept training of defending the tribes. The rankings are divided according to the ages.



Puyuma Distribution

Tsou

Tsou tribe is mostly located at the Alishan Village of Chiayi County and also parts of Sinyi Village in Nantou County, Taoyuan and Sanmin Villages of Kaohsiung County with the population about 6,200. Strictly patriarchal system and the well-organized small and large clans are the social and political structures. Tribal affairs are conducted by men in



“Kuba”, the men house where young people must live in to get trained before getting married. Women must keep away from Kuba.

War ritual is the major tribal religious service which includes men house maintaining, holy tree trimming, and holy spirits meeting, greeting, entertaining and seeing off. The processes are complicated with rhymed songs and dances.



Tsou Distribution

Rukai

With population stays at about 11000, Rukai tribe is located in Maulin Village in Kaohsiung County, Wutai Village in Pintung County and Donhsing Village in Taitung County. Traditional social structure is divided into two hierarchies - nobles and commons. The nobles have the privileges of the



legendary blood superiority and the ownership of lands. Common people can raise their social status by the way of getting leadership, increasing harvest storage and marriage. The eldest son inherits a Rukai family.



Rukai Distribution

Saisiyat

They are mostly live in WufongVillage, Hsinchu County, Nanjuang and Shrtan Villages of Miaoli County. The population is estimated at 5300. Their social organization is maintained predominately by patriarchal structure.



Traditionally, each clan has its totems or symbols. In Chin Dynasty they changed their original totems into Chinese surnames, such as "Feng for Wind", "Ri for Sun" and " Xia for Summer" etc. The most important traditional activity is "Pas-taai". Neighboring closely with Atayal, Saisiyat is greatly influenced by it in culture.



Saisiyat Distribution

Yami

Yami tribe is located in Orchid Island of Taitung with the population of more than 2,700. It is the only oceanic tribe in Taiwan; therefore their culture is kept perfectly. Yami tribe has no leadership system. When disputes between people appear, relatives are called on to solve it. The fathers or men's groups as well as the fishing community administer the community affairs. The creations of art and culture are abundant, e.g. the carving boats, silvery utensils, the pottery, and the mud dolls. Traditional houses are built underground



to keep warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Tribal ceremonies are held according to the activities of capturing the flying fish. Flying fish is regarded being holy. Yami women hair dancing is a special tribal performance. Men's dancing shows both power and strength.



Yami Distribution

Thao

Thao Tribe scattered from Yuchr Village to Shuelli Village in Nantou County with about 600 people. Thao Tribe is originally one of the groups of Tsou tribe. In recent years, the Thao self-consciousness has become strong. Thao tribe gained the recognition by the Executive Yuan on the 8th of August 2001 to be the tenth aboriginal tribe in Taiwan. The



legend about the tribe said that their ancestors found Sun Moon Lake while they were hunting a white deer. Therefore, they moved to there and settled down. Thao has patriarchal society. They were deeply influenced by Han culture, yet they still kept their own parts well. Ancestors' bags are hung in the corner of each family house. Chief is the decision maker of the social business. The position is usually inherited by the eldest son.



Thai Distribution

Kavalan



The Kavalan tribe once extensively inhabited Yilan, but gradually migrated to Hualien and taitung counties. This tribe believes that everything has a sprit, and this belief is evident in its unique ceremonial culture and healing rituals.



Kavalan Distribution

Truku

Truku tribe has more than 20000 people living in areas along Liwu River, Towsay Stream and Mukua Stream. About three to four hundred years ago, Truku ancestors set off from Nantou County, conquered obstacles of nature and surmounted Mount Cilai in the Central Range to migrate along the valley of Liwu River to the east. For hundreds of years, Truku people have developed ethnic specialties; they fought against Japanese Army and worked hard enough to build up their houses. On 14th January 2004, the Executive Yuan of the R.O.C. officially declared Truku as the twelfth



Truku Distribution



tribe of Taiwan indigenous peoples. After some ten years of efforts, Truku's wish for their identity to be recognized was eventually accomplished. Truku are good at hunting, weaving and knitting. They keep traditional techniques of knife making and shaman until now. Ceremony to worship the ancestors is held every year. The story about the rainbow bridge and the ancestors are with special meaning to the tribe. Because of its heavenly landscape, Taroko National Park has made itself a world-famous tourist sightseeing spot.

Sakizaya



Sakizaya people, referred as Sakiraya by the Amis, call themselves as the Sukizaya. The Cipawkan group uses the Sakizaya, while the Takobuan group employs the Sakidaya. The major difference lies in the sound of 'z' of the Cipawkan group that is changed to 'd' of the Takobuan group. The Sakizaya originally lived on the Chilai Plain (Hualien Plain) or the present Hualien City. Hualien was known as 'chilai' or 'kiray' before, and the name was adopted from the 'Sakiraya' employed by the Amis. Sakizaya means 'the real man', a specific group of people who use the Sakizaya language. The language of the Sakizaya is different from those spoken by its neighboring Amis groups, such as Natawran, Polpol, Lidaw, and Cikasuan. These languages are mutually incomprehensible.