

*Small Sea
Travel Diaries*

Tai Tongbe's Records of Taiwan

TRANSLATED
FROM THE LITERARY CHINESE
AND ANNOTATED BY

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For such reasons, Taiwan county has many rebels, more than other districts.

Zhuluo and Fengshan have no residents, only savages.

There are two types of savages, the plains savages⁵ and the wild savages.⁶ The wild savages live deep in the mountains connected at peaks standing so high. It is like they are hidden behind a screen. Forests so deep and trees so dense that one cannot see the sky; horned vines wrap around the trees, so that everywhere one turns, one cannot move. It has grown like this since primitive times, and an axe or machete has never entered. The wild savages live in nests in holes in the ground and they drink blood and eat hair. There are many types. They can climb very steep grades and move quickly through the weeds. They chase monkeys and catch horrible wild animals. The plains savages fear them and do not dare enter their territory. [33] The wild savages are especially fierce and strong; they often come out to burn houses and kill people. Then they return to their lairs so there is no way to get near them. When they kill, they take the head, and when they return they cook it. They strip the skull and sprinkle it with red powder, setting it before their door. The one from the same sect who has the most skulls is the hero. They look as if they are in a dream or drunk, and they have no understanding of civilization. These are real animals! Like a tiger or leopard, if you run into one it will eat you up; or a snake that will bite if you try to catch it. But if you leave them in their nests they will not have poisonous thoughts. So leave them to live and frolic in the wind and fog.

5. *Ta fan* 土番.

6. *Ye fan* 野番.



25 Plains aborigines. Reprinted from John Thompson, *Voyage en Chine* (1873): 239

Last winter, an avarice profit seeker, Lai Ke,⁷ wanted to open up the mountain passes to the eastern plains savages. He took seven companions. They all slept in the day and traveled at night to cross from the wild savage territory across a great many peaks, to the east coast.

The eastern savages knew they were *Tang*⁸ and competed to treat them well, touring them around the many villages. They saw that rice and corn were abundant and every house had a plentitude of supplies. [The villagers] said the wild savages are an obstruction to making contact with the west coast. They hoped that the western aborigines could help to attack. They said, "Send a message to your chief, if he can send troops to help, thousands of us from the east will help dig the mountains and connect a road. Then east and west will become one family. We will all pay taxes and become subjects of the heavenly dynasty."

[The aborigines] took them back by a small boat via the southernmost Sha-ma-ji. The seven received many gifts and said that the savage customs were about the same as those on the west coast. From the plains to the sea, the land is broader than in the west.

If the government can accept their proposal and⁹ attack together with the eastern savages, use force and persuasion, destroy their water and burn their hills, flatten their barbaric dangers, then after a few years the thorns and brambles will be changed into level road, and the Panhu and Jizuo⁹ turned into well behaved subjects.

The savages near the plains only wear a cloth in the winter and summer; they eat coarse rough food and are satisfied. They are uneducated and lack knowledge; they have no desires or ambitions.

⁷ Lai Ke 賴科 was a famous interpreter from Danshui.

⁸ Yu uses the term *Tangren* 唐人 to refer to Chinese.

⁹ The Panhu 槃瓠 and Jizuo 狛狝 were mythical tribes of China in ancient times.

They live from day to day like they are of the generation of Ge Tian and Wu Hui,¹⁰ digging at the land with crude wood, and gathering only enough to fill their stomachs. They always come and go in the city, and their facial appearance is not much different [from the Chinese], only their eyes are set deeper; they are a little bit different. Their language is filled with *lu-guo-lu* sounds; they call wine "*da-lu-su*", and smokes "*du-mu-gu*". It is all about the same as this.

Legend says that Taiwan once was empty and had no people. Then, in the time of the Southern Song Dynasty [1127-1279], the people of the Yuan [1206-1368] wiped out the Jin [1115-1234], and the Jin people floated across the sea to escape the Yuan. They were carried by a cyclone and each chose a place where they would live; to till the land and dig wells and provide for themselves. They had spread out far and wide [around the island] and did not interact together. After many generations they forgot where they came from; but their language has not changed.

In the summer both the men and women go naked, only covering their privates with a cloth 3 *chi* long. In the winter they wear a savage shawl made by stitching together tree bark and dog hair. They also use cloth made of hemp and about as thick as a coin. Two pieces of the cloth are connected together, leaving a hole at the top. To wear it, they pull the head through and the arms hang out. [34] They also have clothes which leave only one side exposed, or expose both the left and right sides. The women wear a cloth that is sewn up at the sides and covers the chest and back. Other clothes are two

¹⁰ Ge Tian 葛天 and Wu Hui 巫媿 were kings of an archaic eon who did not govern.

¹¹ One *chi* 尺 is equal to about 32 centimeters, or 12.5 inches.



26 Aborigines in costume with bracelets, earrings and necklaces. The man on the left may have been a member of the village council, indicated by his decorated staff and goatskin shoes. Reprinted from *Arnoldus Montanus Atlas Chinensis* (The *Johnson 1671*): 29

pieces sewn together, one of which is pulled over the arms, and the other laid over the shoulders. The upper clothing covers the breasts and exposes the stomach. The center cloth is wrapped horizontally and only covers the privates and does not reach the knees. Their feet do not know shoes. A black cloth wraps their buttocks. It is as such that one body has three parts, and each part is separate.

When the old people's hair grows white, they do not have to wear any clothing whether they stand, squat or walk around. The neighboring women do not seem to mind at all.

[The aborigines'] hair looks like messy fleabane; they tie it up every day with mugwort grass, which also acts as perfume. Larvae

and lice crawl around through it. Sometimes young females will rub in oil and braid it into two locks, coiling it on the top of their head. This is very attractive. The good looking ones will try to attract you, but the deer fat they use as oil smells so bad you cannot get near them.

The males compete on the size of their ears. From the time they are children they make a hole in the earlobe and stick bamboo through to make it bigger. Every day they add a bigger shoot. Some are the size of a plate and hang down past the shoulders to their chest. They wear necklaces of conch shells strung together, and wrap them many times around their necks. They use many different and weird colors, making for strange decoration. Their chests and backs are tattooed with things like bird wings, fishnets, tigers and leopards, and many others which are difficult to depict. No matter old or young, they do not leave any hair on their bodies, shaving it clean in five places. If sick, they know no medicine; they only drink a lot of river water and are fine.

The women bathe in the river everyday, whether summer or winter. When they are finished they bring water back from upstream. When sick they bathe more frequently, and when a pregnant woman gives birth they bathe the baby. When a child is suffering from the pox, they drain the liquid and then wash him. "If you don't do this, he cannot recover," they say.

Marriages have no matchmaker. When the girl is grown the parents let her live in a separate room. Young [men] all come and play their nose pipes or jaw harps. If the girl joins in singing, then he enters and they get nasty. After the nasty he leaves. After a time, the girl picks the one she likes the most and they hold hands. This means that she agrees to be with him. The next day, the girl tells her parents and leads the young man in by the hand. He removes his

two front teeth and gives them to the girl and the girl also removes her two teeth and gives them to the man. On a certain day they are married at the woman's house, and he moves in with her, living in the woman's house for the rest of his life. The woman carries on the ancestral line, so that parents cannot have their son at home. From ancient times, it has always been that the next generation and grandson leaves home, so they do not know their ancestors. This is why the savages do not have surnames.

Savage houses resemble tortoise shells. The base is three to five *chi* from the ground, upon which the house is built, and the ridgepole is covered with grass. The grass juts far out in deep eaves touching the ground so that the rain and sun cannot come in. Underneath one can thresh grain or cook, one can sit or lie down. Here they store their ox-carts, fishing nets, farm tools and pigpen posts. Even letting the chickens roost here is not improper. [35]

The front and rear of the house are open, and beneath the ridgepole are steps to climb. The room is completely empty, and one can see a few dogs. In order to lie down, one has a deer-skin mat to place wherever and to recline upon. In the summer, they take away the deer-skins and just lie on the ground. On the wall hangs a calabash as big as a dou that is used to stuff shawls. There are a number of bamboo buckets containing freshly made wine.

The men, women, old folks and children all take part in the winemaking. They all sit around and chew up rice and spit it in the buckets. Within a few days it becomes wine. To drink, they mix it with spring water. When a guest arrives, one of the women first takes a drink from the bucket and then gives it to the guest. If the guest drinks it all, then the hosts are happy. But if he does not then they get displeased with the guest or hate him. They will call for the neighbors' women, whom each wear a shawl, and join hands and



27 Eighteenth-century Chinese watercolor of a lookout tower at Bali, across the river from Danshui, used to watch for attacks by wild savages. Reprinted from *Liu Shiqi, Kanste Cai Feng Tu*, reprint (National Central Library Taiwan Branch 1997)