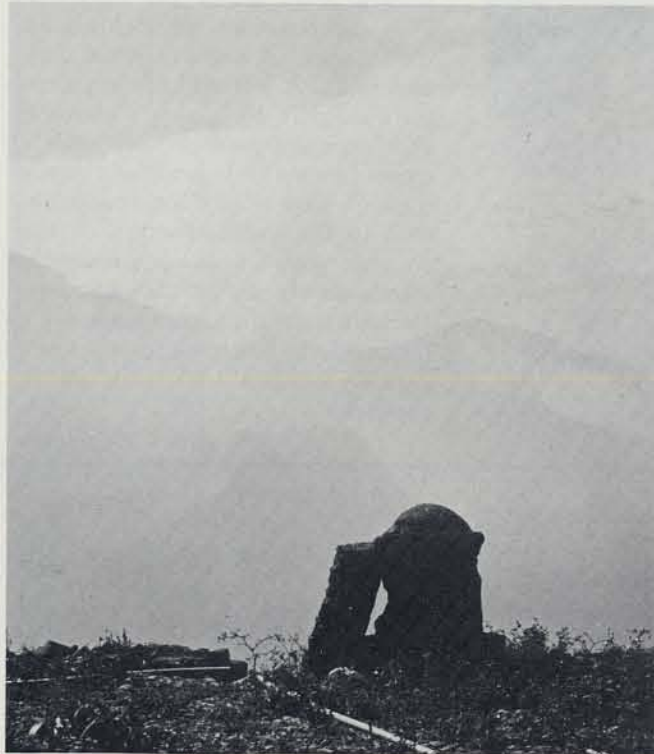


Paiwan Qeluz

A Carved Slate Pillar from Taiwan



1
Scenery from Mt. Djakalaus area.



2
The University Museum's qeluz in situ on Taiwan in 1958. It weighs 3000 pounds and stands 9 feet tall, 3 feet 3 inches wide; thickness varies from 1½ to 3 inches. The carved human figure is 5 feet 6 inches tall and stands out ca. ¼ inch from the background. In this photograph, the jaw bones of wild boar have been tied to the pillar. (UM no. L-555-1)

BIEN D. CHIANG

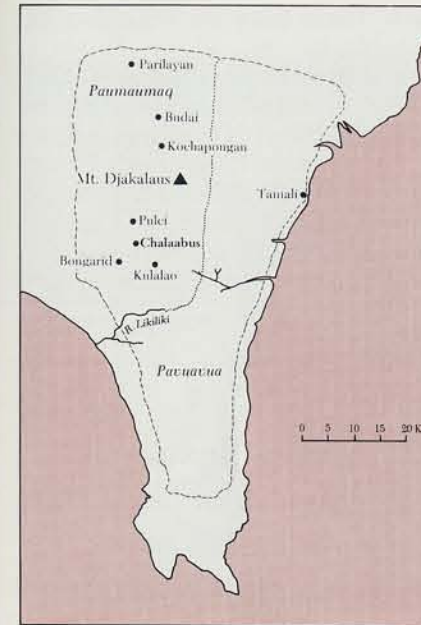
Standing outside in the Sharpe Circle of The University Museum is a 9-foot slate pillar from the Paiwan peoples of Taiwan, Republic of China (Fig. 2). It is a house post, called qeluz, from an aristocrat's house. The date of its manufacture is uncertain, but it is most likely late 19th century. Among the nine different aboriginal peoples of Taiwan, only the Paiwan carve such pieces. This stunning sculpture was lent to The University Museum in 1964 by Mr. Martin J. Forman.

The Paiwan are one of the Austronesian-speaking aboriginal groups on the island of

Formosa (Taiwan). The population of ca. 50,000 occupies the southern part of the central mountain range of the island, living in villages of from 100 to 1,000 souls. Paiwan genesis has it that the tribe originated in Mt. Djakalaus, a mountain in the north of the tribal territory (Fig. 1). Places around Mt. Djakalaus are therefore known as *paumaumaq* (homeland). Areas to the south and the east are correspondingly called *pavuavua* (new territories), with the river Likiliki and the mountain ridge as a vague division (see map, Fig. 3). Documents recording village surveys conducted by the Dutch in the mid 17th century show that this eastward and southward migration had been largely accomplished before the time of Dutch

colonization from 1624 to 1661 (Mabuchi 1953).

One of the principal features of traditional Paiwan society is a stratification system consisting of aristocratic landlords and landless commoners. The old subsistence economy of the Paiwan was a combination of slash-and-burn agriculture and casual hunting. Their diet consisted mainly of taro, sweet potato, millet, and the meat of game animals such as boar and deer. Theoretically the land resources—farm land, hunting fields and building plots—of a village belong to a few chiefly families. Usually an independent village has a paramount chiefly family (Fig. 4) and a number of minor ones, which may or may not be related by kinship to each other and to the



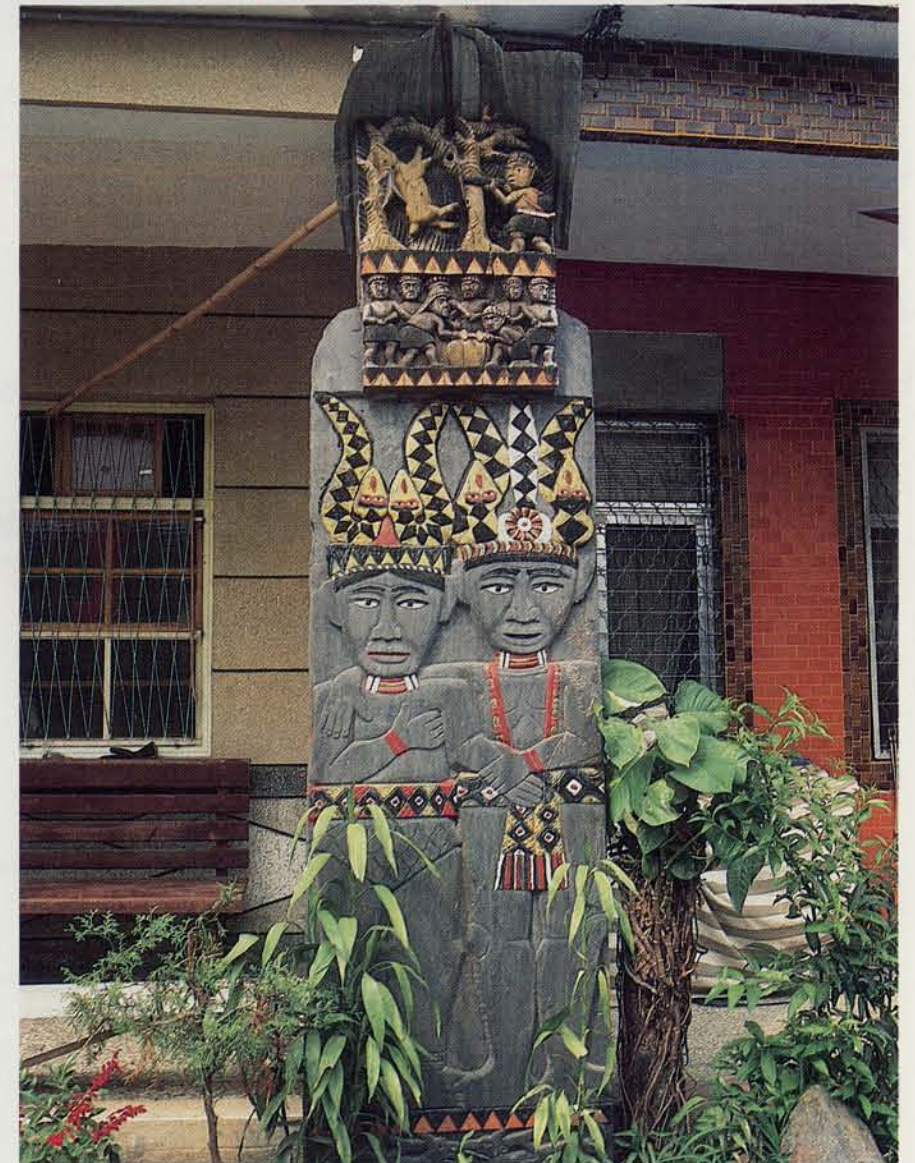
3
Map of southern Taiwan, with locations of Paiwan villages.

paramount chief. Commoners ally themselves as clients and tenants to chiefly families. As landlords, the chiefs collect rent from their tenants. As patrons, they also host religious ceremonies and settle disputes for their clients. And on the whole, as a class of aristocrats, they enjoy the privilege of employing fine works of art as family emblems.

Along with tattooing and the use of certain beaded and embroidered designs, carving is one of the privileged crafts that Paiwan aristocrats utilize to distinguish their houses, household objects, and personal belongings from those of commoners. Among all carved objects, house-related carvings are the most spectacular, and they have special sociological significance. A Paiwan house is more than a dwelling on a plot of land. It represents a perpetual social entity that is separate from the people who dwell there. For example, in Parilayan village, the house named Darimalao was the residence of the paramount chief. About 1968 the chief, a woman whose personal name is Erlen, vacated the house and went to live in another village. Tribute to the paramount chief, however, has continued to be delivered to Darimalao. A relative who lives next door commenced consuming the tribute, mostly food, but he



4
Daughter of the chiefly Ruvaniau family in full dress, Chalaabus village.



5
A more recently made saulaolai combining colored wood and slate carvings; Pulci village.

is always careful to do so in the Darimalao house, not in his own house, because the tribute is considered to belong to that house. The Paiwan house, then, is an embodiment of the social status, the authority, the privileges, and the very social

existence of a fundamental social unit of the society. And this applies to the commoner as well as the aristocratic class.

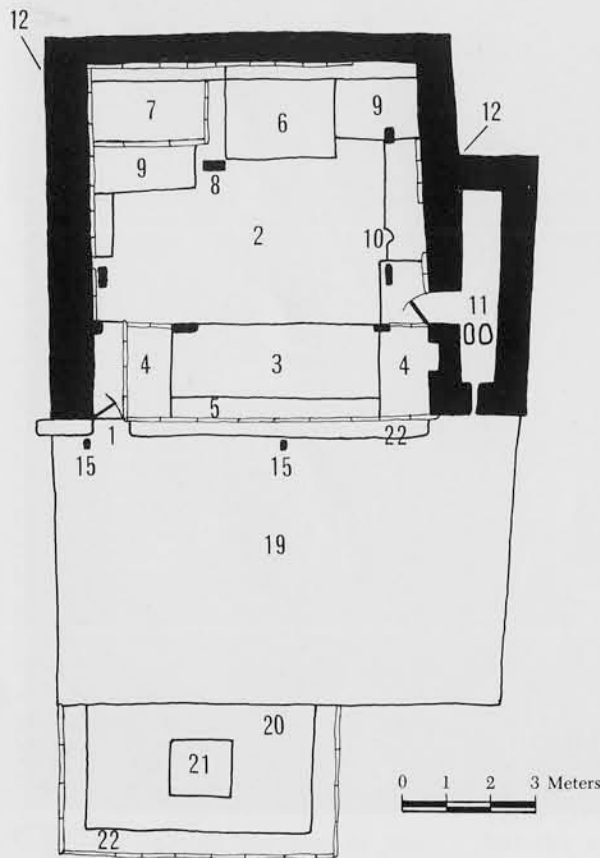
In every Paiwan village, several houses represent genealogical lines that reach far back into the mythical

past. These may be regarded as principal houses, and one of them is the residence of the paramount chief (Figs. 6, 7). All other houses are seen as having hived off from principal houses. As regards the people living in each house, the household group, each has a designated head called *vusam*. The word *vusam* also means "seed millet," thus it connotes the

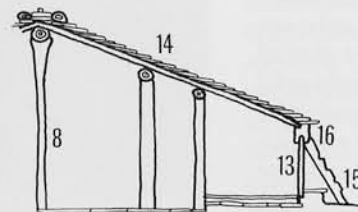
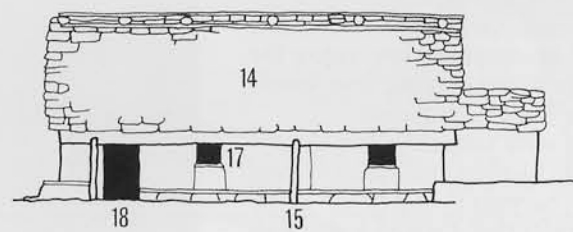
The most luxurious residences of chiefly households have carvings on the wooden eave-beams, doors, screens, main posts, and even walls.



6 House of the paramount chief, the Ruvaniau family, of Chalaabus.



7 Plan of the house of the paramount chief, the Demalalat, of Budai village. (Drawn by Gil Stein after C.L. Chen 1961)



- 1. entrance
- 2. main room
- 3. front room
- 4. bed
- 5. terrace bench
- 6. Chinese-style bed
- 7. granary
- 8. main (ancestor) post
- 9. shelf
- 10. stove
- 11. toilet
- 12. slate wall
- 13. slate slab wall
- 14. roof
- 15. prop
- 16. eave-beams
- 17. window
- 18. door
- 19. front yard
- 20. platform
- 21. slate table
- 22. terrace bench



8 A modern concrete house decorated with colored wooden sculpture and gravel tessellation eaves-beam; Pulci village.



9 Slate construction of Budai village.

possibility that from each existing house and household, others may grow.

Usually, a head of household is succeeded by the eldest child, either male or female; however, controversy over, and political manipulations of, succession, particularly for the paramount chief's household, are common. It is possible, for example, for an ambitious person who is not in a direct line of succession to usurp the paramount chieftainship by demonstrating that he or she can enhance the dignity of the chiefly line. One of the means by which this enhancement is achieved is by improving the condition of their house (Fig. 8). It is therefore not difficult to understand the strong social motivation behind the concern that Paiwan people have about the appearance of their houses and the surrounding landscape. The highly developed crafts of carving and sculpture can, thus, be related to this motivation.

The traditional Paiwan house is an asymmetrical, gabled building made of slate and wood (Figs. 9, 10). Slate slabs are used for walls, roofs, sleeping platform, benches, and all pavements inside and out. Wooden parts include posts, beams, ridge pole, rafters, and doors. The most luxurious residences of chiefly



10 Ordinary slate house of Paiwan commoner.

households have carvings on the wooden eave-beams, doors, screens, main posts (ancestor posts), and even walls. The usual or standard aristocratic house, however, is distinguished only by its carved eave-beams and main post, or *qeluz*.

Most *qeluz* are made of wood, but slate *qeluz* are also found in areas where that material is abundant. Some houses of paramount chiefs of the northern and the eastern Paiwan have carved slate pillars

called *saulaolai* (Fig. 5), which are placed in their front courts where tenants and clients gather for sacred as well as secular events, such as settling disputes, discussing village affairs, or simply social chatting. Literally, *qeluz* means "the main house post which supports the ridge pole," and *saulaolai* means "a stone back-rest on the stone platform in front of house." However, the carving designs of the two are basically the same within the same area.



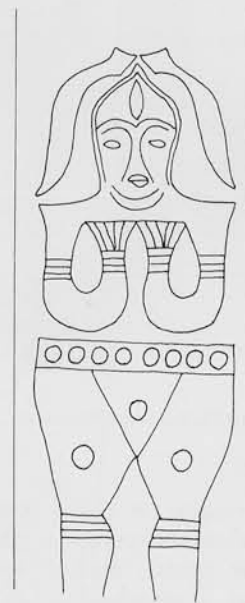
11
Chalaabus style.



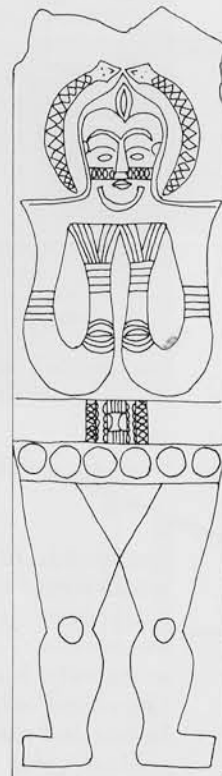
12
A Chalaabus man wearing a headdress made of boar tails and leopard-cat teeth. (Photo courtesy of David Blundell)



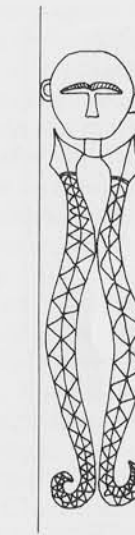
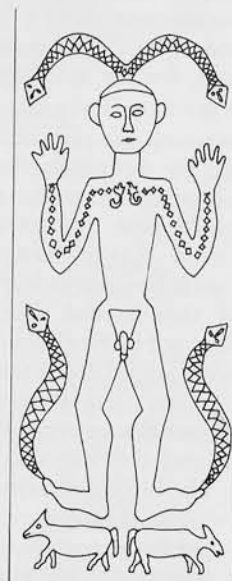
13
Pulci style.



14
Kulalus style.



15
Budai style.



16
Tamali style.

Whether the functional difference between the qeluz and the saulaolai implies a more basic symbolic difference will be an interesting question for further pursuit.

Usually a qeluz is carved with one entire human figure and figures of snakes or other animals. The human figure is either known by a personal name and remembered as the founder of the house or is known as an heroic ancestor of the household. The hundred-pacer snake (*Agkistrodon acutus*) is one of the major characters in Paiwan mythology, and it is generally considered to be the procreator of the nobles and, in some episodes, of the commoners as well. With local variations in details, the focal theme of the procreation myths is that a female human accepted a marriage proposal from a snake, but not without strong dissent from her family. Jars with snake designs were given to

the woman's family by the snake as brideprice, along with the privilege of using the snake design. These jars later became heirlooms of the family line that descended from this reptile-human union. It is curious to note that, contrary to another popular theme—the conjugation between two human ancestors, which sometimes leads not to prosperity but to tragedy in Paiwan mythology—unions between women and snakes always foretell prosperity and abundance for the descendants.

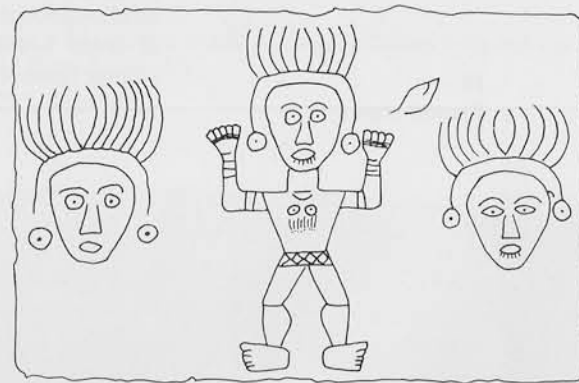
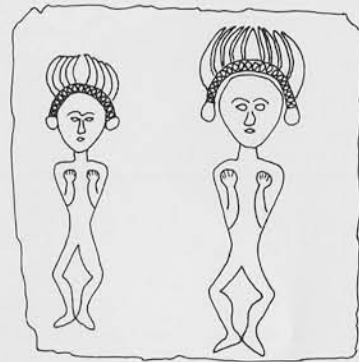
In some areas the snake design becomes highly conventionalized. Chen distinguishes nine styles of qeluz carving design, more or less corresponding to geographical distribution (1961, 1968). According to his classification, the piece from the collections of The University Museum belongs to the Chalaabus style (Figs. 11, 19). Chen characterizes this style as having "a human figure



17
The Chalaabus village.



18 Standing stones as the symbols of Djakalaus and Nagmati, the Creator of Kulalao village.



19 Carvings on slate walls from Chalaabus area.



20 An old sculptor of Kochapongan village at work.

with hands raised in front of the chest, both legs straight, feet pointing outwards, parallel lines on arms indicating armllets. This differs from [other styles] because it has a narrow waist and a headdress which looks like a head ornament made of leopard-cat or wild boar's teeth" (1968: 293; my translation). Another feature of the Chalaabus style as compared to other styles is the absence of a realistic snake motif. In the Pulci and Kulalus styles, the hundred-pacer snake is depicted either by an outlined form alone, an outlined form with rhombuses, or as a belt with rhombuses or circles (Figs. 13, 14). A row of rhombuses is the most stylized symbol of the snake (Fig. 11), and such rows are present in

belts and headdresses that are parts of ceremonial attire. In the Budai and Tamali styles the snake motif is attached to or a substitute for a part of the body (Figs. 15, 16), and in the Kulalus style the human head is in the shape of a snake's head, which suggests the merging or conjunction of snakes with humans as expressed in the Paiwan myth mentioned above (Fig. 14).

Compared to other areas, the qeluz carvings in the Chalaabus area—including villages named Chalaabus, Kulalao, and Bongarid—show a high degree of uniformity in their design. The same designs are also found on slate house walls (Fig. 19). Chen noted that in the 1950s there were fifteen Chalaabus slate pillars still in use and located in that area (1961).

According to the research of Jen Shien-Min, most Paiwan craftsmen, including the sculptors (Fig. 20), are minor aristocrats. They either own land and have tenants or they are exempt from paying rent to a landlord. Sometimes, but not always, the status of craftsman becomes hereditary along a family line. In a few cases, talented commoners become renowned craftsmen, and as a consequence they, along with shamans and skilled warriors, are given special recognition by their patrons. For example, the patron may share with them part of the tribute paid to him by other clients. On the whole, Paiwan craftsmen do not form a special social stratum. They do receive payments for their work, but those are more ceremonial than substantive.

The full significance of Paiwan architectural carving cannot be grasped by a single pillar standing in the Sharpe Circle of The University Museum. The carved eave-beams, posts, and back-rests are components only of finely decorated houses, and it is these houses standing in contrast to the more numerous undecorated dwellings in each community that express concretely and uniquely the important aspects of social life in each village: the social relationships of nobles to commoners, of patrons to clients, and of landlords to tenants. 21



21 Wooden statues made for sale by a young Paiwan sculptor.



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Acknowledgments

Figs. 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19 are by Jennifer Quick after drawings in C.L. Chen 1961.