

# Preliminary Research on Taiwanese Civilization History in the Paleolithic Age

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## ABSTRACT

《*Mountain & Sea Scripture*》 and Chapter Yu Kung of 《*Book Scripture*》 mentioned the interchange between Taiwan and China in the Paleolithic Age. Seashell was used as the currency before Hsia Dynasty in China, being called “Cowry” or “Cowrie” in general and “Cypraea” in scientific name. Cowry is found in the tropical waters of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, especially around Taiwan waters where Japan Current passes by, but they didn't grow in China waters. Mr. Bikisjuma, a Japanese scholar, considered the Chinese shell currency was also known as “Baby-Safe Shell”, being provided by Taiwan in the Paleolithic Age. Thousands of cowries that existed in late Shang Dynasty about 3,300 years ago were discovered at San-Hsing-Tui, Szechuan Basin. Compared to the cowries that picked up at beach of Taiwan, it was found that both are very similar when the cowries discovered in Szechuan were exhibited at National Palace Museum in Taiwan. The viewpoint of Japanese scholar, “Chinese economy was controlled by Taiwan before Hsia Dynasty” has been proven again. 《*Mountain & Sea Scripture*》 indicated Taiwan was a Cockaigne where the ancient Chinese people were longing for settlement. As a paradise, Taiwanese ancestors had a good living environment, developing a noble quality and having a godlike life. Unfortunately, they failed to pursue the further development. After Shang Dynasty, the copper coin replaced the shell currency step by step. As the strength of Taiwan didn't exist any longer, its civilization was displaced by the predominant culture developed in China. Basically, the Formosan autochthons are by no means the barbarian. They began hunting the heads of intruders after the aliens occupied their farmlands. In the Paleolithic Age, there was a high civilization in Taiwan, which might be one of homeland of the people in the world. To prove it, we shall posthaste search for the echoes of the forgotten past civilization.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Vice-President of Academia Sinica, Mr. K.C. Chang, Chinese history including archaeology always had an exclusive convention, that is the research of Chinese historical materials and issues had been restricted within today's Chinese geographic scope. In fact, at least with respect to the ancient history as well as the prehistory, significance and solution of many historical issues in the territory of China shall heavily rely on the papers and researches from foreign countries. Meanwhile, important significance of lots of materials in the territory of China is not limited to address historical issues in the territory of China, (# 1). We, with the

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standpoints referred to above, tried approaching Taiwanese civilization in the Paleolithic Age based upon the existing Chinese and Taiwanese materials and clues.

## TEXT

### 1. Cultural Exchange between Taiwan and China in the Paleolithic Age.

The history of Formosa started in Century XVII or so, while that of the Pescadores (Penghu) is earlier in Sung Dynasty. 《*General History of Taiwan*》 is the first history of Taiwan written by the scholar of Ching Dynasty, Mr. Y. T. Lien. As for the history prior to 《*General History of Taiwan*》, there are incomplete and fragmented records in some Chinese historical materials.

《*Mountain & Sea Scripture*》 stated as follows: “Cockaigne is located in the East Sea; there are celestial beings and immortal medicines on the island. All animals are in white color and palaces are made of gold and silver.”

Mr. Bikisjuma, a famous Japanese scholar in Taiwanese history determined that Cockaigne is Taiwan and there were cultural exchanges between Taiwan and China about 4,200 years ago before the foundation of Hsia Dynasty (# 2).

Besides, Yang-Chou Section in Chapter Yu Kung of 《*Book Scripture*》 recorded as follows: "The native people on the island wore gorgeous clothes. The cloth set with shells and citrus were, under imperial decree, taken as the tribute to China by sea." According to Mr. Bikisjuma, “People on the island” shall refer to the Formosan aboriginals. The cloth set with shells shall be the pearl cloth of Taiya Race. As a matter of fact, cloth set with shell is a woven cloth sewn with many thinned shells, and these shells are shiny as the pearls. The elder of Ketagalan Race in the north of Taiwan said that their ancestor did wear the clothes set with shells.

《*Book Scripture*》 is one of the oldest historical books in China while Yu Kung is one chapter of this book. Yu Kung relates Chinese geography about 4,000 years ago. China was divided into nine states. Yang Chou is a state in the south from Huai River (north) to the sea (southeast). Yu Kung described as follows: “The native people from the island at southeast sea wore gorgeous clothes, paying tribute to China under imperial decree with citrus packed in the cloth set with shells in the bamboo baskets by sea. As Taiwan is located on the southeast sea, the native people stated in Yu Kung are same as the Formosan autochthon; as a result, some scholars considered there was interchange between Taiwan and China for a long time (# 3).

### 2. Chinese Currency in the Paleolithic Age — Cowry.

Like many of other countries in the world, seashell is also the first currency used in China, being called “Shell Currency”. The unit of shell currency is “Peng”. The ancient Chinese, after perforating the seashell from its back, strung the seashells and tied on the body. Like the perforated seashells, the perforated coins that developed later were also tied on the waist or neck. When doing business, they untied the string and paid with shell currency. In the oracle bone inscription, “shell” is a character like a shell pierced with a string.

In Shang Dynasty, “Shell” is a character based upon the Cypraea. Meanwhile, many characters that are relative to treasure adopted “shell” as their radicals. We are sure that seashell is the currency in the anciently. The “seashell” currency system is as follows: Ten small shells were equivalent to one medium shell and ten medium shells were equivalent to one big shell.



Ancient Chinese Currency—Cowry.

The ancient “Shell Currency” was called “Cowry” by Chinese. “*Cypraea tigris*”, a mollusk with a smooth and hard shell, 2 inches long for its body, with white or gray spots on its back, with 2 antennae, lives on the coastal rocks and its shell can be used for decoration. This shell was taken for trading, so it was also called ancient currency (# 4). Based upon the above definition, its appearance and English name, cowry is a shell of Cypraeidae. It is called “Tiger Cowry” in Taiwan (# 5).

“Cowry” was the human's currency in the ancients, being also called “Shell Currency”. In reality, in addition of “Tiger Cowry”, many of other cowries were also used as currency. “*Cypraea moneta*” was the one frequently used, so it was a “Currency Cowry”.

### 3. Scientific Name of Cowry is *Cypraea*.

Its scientific name is *Cypraea*. It is a sea animal of Cypraeidae, with an English name “Cowry or Cowrie”. *Cypraea* is a smooth hemispheric shell. In addition to good protection, its smooth shell can avoid rupture of whole shell due to the external force. *Cypraea* is active in the night, living near coral reef and taking algae as its food.

Basic shape of *Cypraea* is alike. Because of difference in size, color, grain, teeth and rim, there are different names, such as: *Cypraea helvola*, *Cypraea caputserpentis*, *Monetaria moneta*, etc. With elegant and lovely appearance, beautiful color, smooth surface and dazzling brightness, *Cypraea* is in human's good graces and is taken as the favorite by the people over centuries, so it is always the target and material source for collection and shell art (# 6).

*Cypraea* is a tropical shell, and there are 250 species or so. Most of them are found at the coral reefs of tropical shallows in Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. According to the statistics, there are eight species in North Atlantic Ocean, five in Mediterranean Sea and six in West Africa. It is rarely seen in the other areas of Atlantic Ocean, and none is found in the eastern coast of South America. Due to southern warm sea current from Japan Current, Taiwan and its neighboring isles teem with *Cypraea*, so about 75 species are found in Taiwan.

In Japanese character, *Cypraea* is written as “Treasure Shell”. Only few *Cypraea* is found in Japan. With interesting and beautiful appearance, many Japanese love it and it is taken as collector's item by the shell fans. *Cypraea musumea*, *Cypraea japonensis* and *Cypraea teramachi* are called three treasures in Japan and can be found only in deep sea for hundreds of meters. Its market price is ¥100,000, so it is very expensive.

### 4. Seashell Discovered in San-Hsin-Tui Symbolizes Wealth before Shang Dynasty.

According to archaeological data of early Shang Dynasty, we can find the sea- shells were frequently buried with the decedents. Many seashells of early Shang Dynasty were discovered from the tombs in Chengchou and Hui County, Honan Province. After Shang Dynasty, to bury seashells with the decedents has become a prevailing customs in Chun-Chiu Age and Han Dynasty, since many seashells were discovered from the tombs in Central Plains and Yunnan, China. Besides, after comparing thousands of seashells from San-Hsin-Tui, Szechuan and sea- shells from tombs in Central Plains at the same period, we found there are four species (# 7).

A. *Monetaria moneta*: It also called “Violet Cowry”, being a 1.5 cm long shell in oval shape. Its upper back is a little higher, and there are violet, brown and gray-green spots on its front and back. A considerable quantity of this shell was found. A big hole was ground for this kind of shell. This shell was used as currency by lots of people around the Pacific Ocean, therefore, it is also called currency cowry. *Monetaria moneta* is

found at coral reefs along the coasts of Taiwan, especially nearby Wu-Kang-Suo Port of the Pescadores.

B. *Monetaria annulus*: Its volume is highest among all cowries. A big hole was ground for the backs of most of the shell, and backs of some shells are in a flat form. Its length is 1 cm or so, and there are light brown or light gray, gray-brown or gray grains around its back. The shell is found at coral reefs along the coasts of Taiwan and the Pescadores, especially nearby Wu-Kang-Suo Port of the Pescadores.

C. *Cyproles tigris*: Its length is 3 cm or so. This shell was rarely seen. There are different brown and gray spots on its back. Some diggers and researchers considered that the shell is the natural one used in Hsia Dynasty. Like the *Cypraea tigris*, the shell is found a coral reefs along the coasts of Taiwan and Pescadores.

D. *Erronea erronea*: This shell has a longer size with a date form. The shell is found at coral reefs along the coasts of Taiwan and the Pescadores, especially nearby Pai-Sha Isle, Hou-Liao, Tse-Kang and Chi-Tou, Pescadores (# 8).

In terms of variety, seashells discovered from San-Hsin-Tui relic, basically included all varieties used in Central Plains in Shang Dynasty and Yunnan in Chun-Chiu Age and West Han Dynasty. As an inland country, we can figure out how frequent exchange and contact among old Szechuan Nation with its neighbors. Copper coins have been used at the time of San-Hsin-Tui relic, but the seashells from sacrificial caves were taken as a symbol of wealth and carefully placed into the handwork copper containers.

## 5. Taiwanese *Cypraea* is Ancient Chinese Currency — “Baby-Safe Shell” .

Mr. Bikisjuma inferred that “Baby-Safe Shell” used as the materials of currency in China about 5,000 ~ 6,000 years were coming Taiwan and its neighboring isles, so the materials of currency all were supplied by Taiwan. Allow us to probe “Baby-Safe Shell” issue later.

*Cypraea* was taken as an amulet and cultural symbol owing to its special shape and color. They said that a woman easily conceived if the *Cypraea* was sewn in her skirt. When a woman delivered the baby, she should grasp a *Cypraea*, especially the hard *Cypraea mauritiana*, in order to increase the push force of her abdomen, so that she could deliver the baby favorably. It is also said that *Cypraea* is the patron saint for safe delivery of the baby, so it is also called “Baby-Safe Shell”.

The domain of China was only restricted in the north before Shang Dynasty, and no *Cypraea* was produced along its coasts. The people lived in the south of China, Indochina or India that produced *Cypraea* had no interchange with the people in the north of China. 《*Book Scripture*》 only mentioned the latter only had interchange with Taiwan.

As stated by Mr. Bikisjuma, Taiwan and its neighboring isles were the origin of “Baby-Safe Shell”, supplying a large quantity of currency to China.

Evidently, the currency used in and before Hsia Dynasty are the “Baby-Safe Shell” coming from Taiwan. The time is later than at one thousand year as inferred by Mr. Bikisjuma.

In addition to China, *Cypraea* is being used as currency by some tribes in Africa, islands in Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean and New Guinea Height.



## 6. Seashell From San-Hsin-Tui have been Proven as Taiwanese *Cypraea*.

To check whether or not the ancient shell currency from China are the Baby-Safe Shells – *Cypraea*, coming from Taiwan as mentioned by Mr. Bikisjuma, we personally visited National Palace Museum in Taiwan. The cowries of cultural relics, discovered from San-Hsin-Tui, Szechuan, were exhibited in there. With the consent

of the sponsor, Pacific Ocean Culture Foundation, we took picture of ten pieces of cowry at the site and found there is a big hole on the back of every cowry, and it can be connected with a string, so apparently they used to be the circulating shell currency.



(Left) Seashells discovered from San-Hsin-Tui, Szechuan in Late Shang Dynasty — Cypraea. (Right) Seashells can be easily found at Northeast Cape of Taiwan — Cowries. They look as the same that can prove “Taiwanese Cypraea is Ancient Chinese Currency” .

Cypraea is frequently found throughout the coasts or seashores of Taiwan, especially at Northeast Cape, East Coast and Pescadores. The authors easily picked up dozens of similar Cypraea at the seashore nearby the east of Pitou Tunnel, Northeast Cape. We took pictures for ten of these shells and ten shells from San-Hsin-Tui.



4 shell turtles made of cowry purchased at Yeliu Scenic Spot.

After comparing two pictures, we found that size, shape and color of the seashell from San-Hsin-Tui are similar to those from the coast in Taiwan. Mr. Bikisjuma said that Baby-safe Shells of Taiwan were the ancient currency in China. We trust it should be true.

Cowry from Taiwan is also called “Turtle Shell” because the form of its back is like the back of a turtle. After we stick some small shells at its head, tail and limbs and add the eyes, it looks like a small turtle (as figure). Such a lovely turtle becomes the souvenir in some scenic spots near the coasts in Taiwan.

Shell currency is called Pira by the Formosan autochthon, Paise by Ketagalan and Piso by Filipinos (its pronunciation is similar to the nowadays currency Peso). The Formosan autochthon calls Gurisju for the metallic coin.

During Japanese occupation time and Taiwan restoration, many Japanese and Taiwanese scholars and archaeologists engaged in the archaeological work and field survey in Taiwan, and their prehistoric papers are the basis relating to Taiwan's prehistory.

In the “Taiwanese Prehistoric Relics Distribution Map”,



Investigation Results in Archaeology from Japanese Occupation Time through 1949. ○ indicates prehistoric relic and △ indicates prehistoric relic involved cowry midden.

the ancestral relics were found in every corner of Taiwan. Besides, more and more relics that were discovered recently have not been included on the said map. Many of them are middens.

One midden discovered at the site planned for the outlet of 4th Nuclear Power Plant left lots of broken cowries and other shells. In the site, (please refer to the picture), we discovered broken ceramics, copper bells, ironwork, cowries for currency and other shiny shells. This midden is quite different from those found in the other places of Taiwan.

In addition to shells, teeth and bones of some animals were frequently found in other middens. However, no any animals' bones have been found at the above midden, so we are sure that the midden was not the one for meal refuses. We thought this place might be the waste cowries and shells processing plant because some ceramics, copperware and ironwork were discovered with the broken cowries and shells here.

Perhaps, there might be some other waste plants that have not been discovered yet. This location might be a port for exporting the cowries and seashells for China before, but we need additional stronger evidences.

## 7. Taiwan's Caves were the Paradises for the Ancient Chinese.

In the Paleolithic Age, the currency of China was provided by Taiwan, it should mean that Taiwan used to be a rich country and Taiwanese shell currency controlled Chinese economy. If there was no *Cypraea* from Taiwan, there was no cowry in China and there was no economic activity for China. As a result, Taiwan (Cockaigne) was the only paradise longed by Chinese people. 《*Mountain & Sea Scripture*》 stated as follows: “Cockaigne is located in the East Sea; there are celestial beings and immortal medicines on the island.” Paradise is a place where all the gods are living; and Cockaigne is Taiwan.

In 1998, the scholars discovered the arete terrain formed with cirques in the first and second valleys of Snow Mountain and glacial “Scratch” in the Black Forest, so it is evidently that the glacier of 4th Glacial Period came to Snow Mountain before. Cherry salmons that are living in Chi-Chia-Wan, upper stream waters of Ta-Chia River within Hsueh-Pa National Park and small kolinskies that were found in the Jade Mountain all can prove that Taiwan was in the glacial period for a long time. According to our detailed investigation, the best way to survive in the glacial period and harsh environment was to dig the caves in order to live in the caves.

So far, we have found about one hundred caves throughout Taiwan. No any record relating to the caves is found in the historic materials after Tan Dynasty. As a result, the caves should be prevailing before Shui Dynasty. Liu-Kiu Profile in Shui Book recorded as follows: “Liu Kiu (Taiwan) is in the sea at the east of Chien-An County (Chien-Chen County, Fukien Province). It takes 5 days by sea for this island, and there are many caves over there.” Many caves should exist before Shui Dynasty. In this connection, no other historic data have been found before Shui Dynasty. These caves were not the natural case neither for mining purpose, but should be made by hand. The caves are the “Cockaigne” that the ancient Chinese longed for. The density of the caves is the highest in the world.

Chapter Chin Emperor in Historic Records stated as follows: Hsu Fu et al. reported the Emperor that there were three gods mountains in the sea, i.e., Feng Lai, Fang Chang and Yin Chou, where many gods were living.



Cowry Midden at the Site Planned for the Outlet of 4th Nuclear Power Plant.

The Emperor dispatched Hsu Fu and thousands of children to these mountains in order to find the immortal medicines. They failed to arrive at Feng Lai, but only arrived at Yin Chou (Japan). They didn't find the gods and get the immortal medicines, so they settled in Japan because they would be killed if they got back China.

As a result, Taiwan should have some favorable conditions and backgrounds to attract Chinese people in the Paleolithic Age. In addition to economy controlled by Taiwan, Taiwan should have other splendid culture to be dug up by us.

#### 8. Godlike Life for Formosan Autochthon in the Paleolithic Age.

“Honesty” is the lofty character of the Formosan aboriginals. They were pure like the god. Good order could be maintained without passive sanction and law. This is a good tradition of Taiwanese ancestors (# 9).

Owing to fertilization of land and abundance of resources, Taiwanese ancestors were living like the gods. 《*General History of Taiwan*》 said: “Taiwan was, before founding by Koxinga, occupied by the aboriginals. They lived happily without farming or weaving, and the seasons were determined from the growth of the plant. They were happy like the gods”( # 10). The godlike life of Taiwanese aboriginals was clearly stated in this book. However, they failed to pursue the further development; their culture was gradually replaced by Chinese culture. In this regard, we can prove from the discovered relics of the Neolithic Age.

#### 9. Taiwan's Civilization Gradually Declined After Copper Coins Replaced Seashell.

As China was a country with vast territory, seashell currency supplied by Taiwan was limited. Because Seashell currency could not be made by man, it was one after another displaced by the copper coins after Shang Dynasty. As a result, we learn that Baby-safe shell gradually withdrew from Chinese market after Shang Dynasty. Seashell currency was eliminated in Chin Dynasty, and it was replaced by copper coins. In 1953, three pieces of copper coin of Shang Dynasty were discovered in Anyang, Honan; in 1960s, two pieces of copper coin were discovered from the tombs within relics of Shang Dynasty; 109 pieces of copper coin and 112 pieces of seashell currency of late Shang Dynasty were discovered in Paote, Shan-Hsi.

Although seashell currency was gradually replaced by copper coins, Baby-safe shells still symbolized the wealth. Some people still regard it as the luxurious decorations. Thousands of seashells discovered from San-Hsing-Tui were taken as the offering representing the wealth at the sacrificial rites.

Taiwan didn't, after seashell currency had been displaced by copper coins, send large quantity of baby-safe shells to China, as a result, the cultural interchange between Taiwan and China interrupted step by step. Since then, Taiwanese civilization turned declined gradually. Formosan aboriginals changed only after invasion of aliens.

#### 10. Formosan Autochthon Began Hunting Man's Head after Aliens Occupied Their Farmlands.

《*General History of Taiwan*》 stated as follows: “Taiwan is an island at the southeast of Mainland China, being surrounded by the sea. Thousands of naked savages were hunting and fishing over there.” The author only saw the appearance of the aboriginals and group hunting activities, failing to make a further research of their thinking.

Prof. Kokubun Naoichi went to Taiwan when he was a baby, growing up in Taiwan. After he majored in History at the Imperial University, Kyoto, he returned Taiwan and engaged in historical education and

investigation. He had a great contribution to the archaeology and research relating to Formosan autochthon. He always explored the custom of aboriginals and dug and collected the cultural objects at the villages of aboriginals. His greatest achievement is to discover the ceramics of the prehistoric culture at Yangkang, Tainan.

When Prof. Kokubun held a seminar at Pei Meng Senior High School, Tainan on May 13, 1999, he said that the custom hunt the man head didn't exist in the Paleolithic Age until aliens occupied their farmlands. It should be a great insult if the invaders occupied their farm and residential lands, so they would do every endeavor to defend the invasion. Therefore, Formosan aboriginals were not the savages by birth. They were considered as barbarians when they protected their homeland.



Picture with Prof. Kokubun Naoichi in the Seminar

## DISCUSSION

1. Historical materials relating to Taiwan prior to Sui Dynasty are not many. This article only inferred with reference of 《Mountain & Sea Scripture》 and 《Book Scripture》, so the materials are insufficient. There should be more and more records in regard to the exchange between Taiwan and China, but many books have been burnt in Chin Dynasty. Perhaps, there are other records relating to Taiwan in the other ancient books, but we need to take time to make further investigation in the future.
2. Many Japanese scholars had great contribution to the archaeology and field survey with regard to Taiwan. We cited their papers many times when preparing the article.
3. Taiwan authorities made little account of the relics in the Paleolithic Age. The Cross city in the sea of Pescadores has been found seventeen years ago, no any authority-in-charge starts investigating this city, but some Japanese experts came to visit it. Moreover, hundreds of artificial caves are the historical database for Taiwan, but nobody pays attention to them. We sincerely hope the competent authorities can be responsible for conducting a large investigation.
4. For the special midden discovered at the outlet to be for 4th Nuclear Power Plant, though the archaeological experts of Academia Sinica suggested expanding the archaeological area, but TPC failed to accept it. If the research area is expanded, we are sure that the relics of seashell currency plants should be suppliers of Chinese markets in the past. It can be also proven that Taiwan is a rich island. That was the reason why Chinese people longed for.
5. There are many themes for studying the relics in the Paleolithic Age, such as the Cross city in Pescadores, artificial caves, pyramids, megalith, totem and midden. We only made a preliminary study in the field of seashells herein.
6. In the Taiwan Relics Distribution Map, the relics of our ancestors were discovered throughout the island. Taiwan is by no means a savage place, having high civilization in the Paleolithic Age.
7. Recently, Taiwan has been considered as the origin of Austronesian race. Polynesian and Maori all are coming from Taiwan, so we can consider that the Taiwan is one of the origins of human civilization, but we still need stronger support from the ancient relics.

## CONCLUSION



We have come to the underlying conclusions:

1. Before Hsia Dynasty, Cowry used as the currency in China is the turtle *Cypraea* from Taiwan. Its scientific name is *Cypraea*, also known as Baby-Safe Shell.
2. Mr. Bikisjuma considered that the Baby-Safe Shells were coming from Taiwan, so that all currency materials were supplied by Taiwan before Hsia Dynasty. We believe it is true.
3. Owing to fertile land and good resources, the ancestors of Taiwan enjoyed a godlike life.
4. After copper coins replaced seashell currency since Shang Dynasty. Formosan civilization became declined day by day and was replaced by Chinese culture. They had a custom to hunt man head after the invaders occupied their farmlands.

We could only arrive at some preliminary conclusions from some information and events since the historical and archaeological materials have been greatly limited. However, it should be good to the continuous study of Taiwanese prehistory based upon this starting.

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