



House Panel

Date

1677-1707

Primary Maker

Ketagalan

Medium

Camphor wood

Description

The Ketagalan people responsible for the carving of this chief's house façade originally came from the coastal plains of Taiwan. Like other Pingpu or coastal peoples, the Ketagalan were matrilineal society practicing ancestor worship and animism. The originally lived in houses on stilts. Mainland Chinese first immigrated to these areas in large numbers in the 18th and 19th Centuries and forced the aboriginals out of their traditional homes and into the low northeastern mountains of modern day New Taipei City where Dr. George Mackay, missionary and collector of Taiwanese aboriginal artifacts, first encountered them. It is likely that this Ketagalan façade was made prior to the group's exodus, and travelled with the group, subsequently being installed in the new site. This makes dating the object difficult, but an expert from the National Taiwan University approximates the date as being 100 years before the move, mid 18th Century. The façade itself is purportedly carved from single piece of a camphor tree 25 ft. in diameter. The tree though, was likely smaller than Mackay claimed it to be. The intricate design motifs of aboriginal figures, junks, and queue-wearing mainlanders seem to tell the bitter story of Chinese immigration to the island. These stylized forms and geometric zigzag and diamond patterns are all consistent with works from the Ketagalan or their related neighbors to the east, the Kavalan. These can even be seen in contemporary tribal learning centers today.

Dimensions

94 × 107 × 1 in. (238.8 × 271.8 × 2.5 cm) a: 43 × 107 × 1 in. (109.2 × 271.8 × 2.5 cm) b: 51 × 100 × 1 in. (129.5 × 254 × 2.5 cm) Door: 31 × 23 in. (78.7 × 58.4 cm)