

Traditional Dwelling of Alisan Tsou and Its Changes under Japanese Rule

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to study the traditional dwelling of the Alisan Tsou in terms of its spatial layout, structure, functions, and cultural meanings; and traces its changes under Japanese rule. Ethnographs were examined and field interviews with elders were conducted. The investigation revealed that the traditional Alisan Tsou dwelling, which can accommodate a sub-clan, has an oval floor plan with the sun's trajectory from sunrise to sunset as its axis. Its sky-like thatched roof and the ritual of in-house burial reflect the Tsou's cosmological concepts of day versus night and life versus death. Daily living and taboos of the Alisan Tsou are organized around the principles of female/male, agricultural deity/hunting god, and granary/structure for animal skeleton. In fact, the structural layout of traditional Tsou dwelling reflects a metaphor of the human body. Along with Japanese rule came the introduction of modern concepts of personal health and hygiene, industrial innovations, new materials and technology as well as aesthetic perspectives for architecture. All these had impact on the Tsou traditional way of life which was gradually taken over by modern lifestyle. The self-contained traditional dwelling withered to become a structure of the past and what remained was the transformed and much reduced "emo-no-peisia", serving as a prevailing symbol of the cultural complex.

Keywords: The Tsou, House, Transformation, Dwelling, Mount Ali