

The Establishment and Transformation of Ta-she Village (1715-1945)

: A Study of Non-native Cultural Influences on An-li Ta-she

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Abstract

Before the arrival of Han Chinese settlers, Taiwan was an island with the plains aborigines (P'ing-p'u Tsu 平埔族) living in the western plains area, and the mountain aborigines (Kao-shan Tsu 高山族) scattered among the foothills and mountain regions.

Confronting the Chinese settlers in a struggle for survival, some aborigines initially resorted to means such as head-hunting or armed resistance. However, these efforts proved largely futile in the face of the superior strength of the Chinese. Most of the native people chose between two options: accept the sinicization process, which most did, or move on to new lands in order to seek out a new life, the route taken by a minority. The fact that many plains aborigines soon submitted to the pressures of sinicization is often attributed to government policies, as well as Chinese economic and cultural pressures. On the other hand, some groups, such as the An-li tribes (An-li she 岸裡社), after having undergone the process of sinicization, a hundred and fifty years later accepted Christianity (in 1871) and were also influenced by Japanese culture after 1895.

This article explores the process of sinicization and the multifarious cultural character of Ta-she village, one of the An-li tribes, settlements, by focusing on its different appearances. It describes and analyzes the history of the An-li tribe, the development and transformation of Ta-she settlement, and the ways in which the native people adjusted to various non-native cultures. The influences of Chinese, western, as well as Japanese cul-

tures are discussed in order to understand the question of native cultural transformation between 1715 and 1945. Using various historical data, I examine the socioeconomic and cultural impact of these non-native cultures on the An-li Ta-she tribe and try to illustrate the limitations of the conventional sinicization concept.

This paper offers a case study of the formation and development of Ta-she village, an aboriginal settlement, with focus on its appearance during the Ch'ing Dynasty. The establishment of Ta-she village began with the migration of Ma-shu Chin-she in order to govern the other An-li tribes. Because of excellent topography, nice weather and copious water resources, the tribe chose Ta-she as a place to settle down. In presenting a detailed description of the process of settlement and the appearances of the village, I have discovered the following unique phenomenon: Judging from the different appearances of Ta-she village, we can see an example of non-native cultural influence on "aboriginal settlement". Not only its connotation but the process of diversity of appearances, sinicization is just one pattern of change of culture. This special case represents an important exception to the usual model. Facing the powerful non-native cultural, in particular, Han culture, the aborigines had a limited number of options in terms of how they could respond. In theory, cultural development is always dominated by superior groups during the process of contact and interaction among these cultural groups. But the case of the An-li tribe discussed in this article indicates that the conventional concept of sinicization can not cover the phenomenon of encounter and interaction between An-li Ta-she and non-native cultures. The article shows that the tribe maintained its own initiative and choice in the face of external forces and non-native culture.