

Disease, Marginal Indigenous Society and Civilized Body: A Case Study of I-lan Taiyal in 1895-1945

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the relationship between infectious disease and the change of the Taiyal tribal society under Japanese Rule. The focus of the analysis is on the change of and the interaction between the Taiyal's living environment, their traditional culture, and the pattern of the diseases. The paper notes that the Taiyal was the chief target of colonial government's policy of controlling the aborigines and that the Taiyal society changed markedly during the colonial period. The study focuses on the influence of the infectious diseases as one of the major factors that caused the change of the tribal society.

The paper concludes that the Taiyal had adjusted themselves to Taiwan's particular natural environment by establishing specific cultural mechanism. Both the tradition of head-hunting and the practice of dispersing themselves in mountain area had the function of preventing diseases. This Taiyal cultural tradition was also defined "barbarian" customs. The colonial government forced the Taiyal to move away from the mountain area and to practice rice-farming in order to exploiting natural resources of this area. As a result of this aborigine-controlling policy, the Taiyal was more vulnerable to infections, such as epidemic and endemic malaria in civilized area. The spread of the new diseases damaged Taiyal's health and the tribal society was increasingly dependent upon the modern medical system. Disease thus played an important role in the change of the Taiyal tribal society.

Keywords: Taiyal, head-hunting, tribe group-moving, aborigine-controlling policy, malaria

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