



THE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF PLAINS
ABORIGINE IN TAIWAN - THE RECONSTRUCTION AND
INNOVATION FROM LOCAL PEOPLE AFTER NATURAL
DISASTER

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Abstract

Among all of the Austronesian Aborigines in Taiwan, Plains Aborigine was the group that interacted the earliest and most frequently with other major immigrant ethnic groups and rulers; Siraya was the earliest aborigine group to interact with the Dutch and Han Chinese because of its location on the riverside between Nanzixian River and Laonong River in Kaohsiung. Its geography also helped preserve a good amount of original Siraya "villages." Images of Siraya in Kaohsiung was also the first Plains Aborigine in Taiwan to be recorded and presented to the world. To people in modern society, it is only part of the history; yet this history is not fading

away but struggling to find back their own culture and history while surrounded by the invasion of other ethnic groups and political oppression, and is persistent to preserve their cultural heritage and hopes to be understood and respected by other ethnic groups.

After the central disaster "Typhoon Morak", many areas where Siraya of Plains Aborigines live were undergoing the adversity. The most seriously stricken area was Siao-Lin Village, the residency area of Tevorang Group of Siraya. From the research of the reconstruction of Siao-Lin Village in Kaohsiung, the connection between old and new environments and the overall consideration to preserve their tribe culture are neglected. After the disaster, local residents contributed their efforts to rebuilding traditional culture and village; and this bottom-up approach did further influence the government's reconstruction plan. This thesis will discuss the current cultural resource preservation of Plains Aborigines in Taiwan, and how Siraya used their own power to reconstruct their tribe culture after the strike of natural disaster.

Key words: Plains Aborigine; Culture Landscape; Siraya; Tevorang; Kaohsiung

Plains Aborigine in Taiwan

Taiwan's precious cultural variety is originated from the merge of cultural characters from different ethnic groups. Among the four major ethnic groups in Taiwan, there are not only Chinese Han immigrants in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty (Fulao and Hakka), but also immigrants Mountain Tribes Indigenous and Plains Aborigines are both aborigines and each has different living areas, culture and religions. However, because of the policies conducted by the rulers, those two tribes overlap their living areas and culture. As a result, it

created a culture of variety and richness throughout history, and became part of the abundant cultural inheritance in Taiwan.

Among all of the Austronesian Aborigines in Taiwan, Plains Aborigine was the group that interacted the earliest and most frequently with other major immigrant ethnic groups and rulers. Siraya was the earliest aborigine group to interact with the Dutch and Han Chinese. Siraya is located in the wide plains in south-western Taiwan, including Tainan, Kaohsiung, Pingdong and some areas in Hualien. The

narrower definition of Siraya includes the four major groups in Taijiang coastal area: Xingang Group, Mujialiuwan Group, Madou Group and Xiaolong Group. The wider definition of Siraya is referred to the Siraya people in Tainan, Kaohsiung, Pingdong and immigrants to Taidung and Hualien, including Siraya Group, Tevorang Group and Makatao Group.

Tevorang Group, Xingang Group and Dajiedian Groups are considered Siraya in Kaohsiung. Through visible and invisible cultural resources, all of the groups have presented the undebatable fact that aboriginal tribes do exist. Despite the influence of rulers policies and urbanization, few tribes experienced not only the decline of their own traditional religion and culture, but the frequent interaction with Han Chinese that leads to the diversity of religions and changes of tradition and culture; however many of the tribes still preserve the traditional ceremonies, lifestyle, culture, heritage and places of worship.



Figure 1. The night ceremony in Siao Lin Village



Figure 2. Siao Lin Konkai

Plains Aborigines Stepping up to the World Stage

Kaohsiung is a wide region that has diverse geographic features, with plains, hills and mountains scattered in the area. Throughout history, Plains Aborigines were forced to move from the plains to hilly areas along the mountain.

Following the development footprint of No. 3, 20 and 21 highway, the existence of Siraya villages is obvious. Along the riverside areas of Nanzixian River and Laonong River, the geographic character helped preserve many original villages. Siraya in

Kaohsiung has never missed out in the history of Taiwan, regardless of historical or geographical perspectives. To be more precise, it has always taken an important role for being the first area to be recorded and presented to the world. In 1871, British photographer John Thomson followed missionary Dr. James L. Maxwell and entered Presbyterian Church's parish in the Plains Aborigines area. The three parishes of Dr. James L. Maxwell are located in the Plains Aborigines area, the Eastern Church in the first parish covers Bama (Zuozheng, Tainan), Gangzilin (Xingshi, Tainan), Mucha (Neimen, Kaohsiung), Jiaxianpu (Jiaxian, Kaohsiung), Jibeishua (Donghe, Tainan), Fanzitian (Longtian, Tainan); all of the above are the residency areas of Siraya. John Thomson photographed Siraya people's faces, clothes, lifestyles, houses and surroundings and published them in the book "Illustrations of China and its people," as shown in figure 3 and figure 4, which helped presented Taiwan aborigines to the world. To people in modern society, it is only part of the history; yet this history is not fading away but struggling to find back their own culture and history while

surrounded by the invasion of other ethnic groups and political oppression, and is persistent to preserve their cultural heritage and hopes to be understood and respected by other ethnic groups.

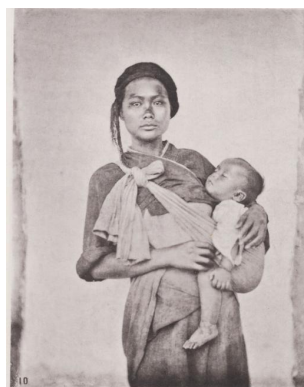


Figure 3. Image of Siraya in Kaohsiung Lakuli



Figure 4. Image of Siraya in Kaohsiung Baksa

*Cultural Heritage Preservation and
Cultural Landscape*

"Operational Guidelines for the
Implementation of the World Heritage"

divided cultural landscapes into three categories: landscape designed and created intentionally by man, organically evolved landscape and associative cultural landscape. On the other hand, the Cultural Landscape Foundation at National Park Service in the USA considers there are four categories of cultural landscapes: Historic Sites, Historic Designed Landscapes, Historic Vernacular Landscape and Ethnographic Landscape. According to the definitions above, cultural landscapes can be divided to two main categories: conceptual description of the interaction between people and nature, and detailed description of the industry, myths and history of the cultural landscapes. In 2005, Taiwan amended the Cultural Heritage Term and added the category "cultural landscape." It legalized cultural landscape as one of the cultural resources and further connected to the trend to preserve cultural heritage in the world.

Natural Disaster and Community Reconstruction

In August, 2009, Typhoon Morak stroke Taiwan and brought in over 1000 milliliters of rain on a single day, which

broke the record of the highest amount of rainfall recorded on a single day in history. Siao-Lin Village in Jiashian District, Kaohsiung underwent a serious disaster at 6:09 am on August 9. Xiandu Mountain of 1445.1m instantly collapsed and masked the 9 to 18 lin neighborhood in Siao-Lin Village. It took 463 lives and caused a lot of debris to block the Nanzixian River channel, and thus formed a large lake which enclosed later on. It was a central disaster that shocked the world.

The reconstruction work after Typhoon Morak went through twists and turns. From "Wulipu Permenent House" to "Tzu Chi Love Park" and "Wulipu Second Base-Siao-lin Second Village, " the reconstruction work was finally completed in August in 2010. There were 276 permanent houses built in three new communities. Recalling the reconstruction, the support network was built between central government, local government, Siao-Lin Village residents and relevant non-governmental organizations. However, a gap regarding role definition and overall goals occurred in the network. Two years before the reconstruction, the network in Siao-Lin Village stumbled upon people's

opinion, resources, policies, power, ethnic groups, culture and industries; yet the reconstruction focused on the positive and generative influence of economic benefits, power of mercy, fairness of policies, social impression.

From the building of permanent houses to execution of policies for the construction work of Siao-Lin Village, there are possibilities and impossibilities, and conflicts and compromises, such as the reconstruction ideology in the community plan and the space arrangement designed by professionals. From Siao-Lin Village resident's point of view on reconstruction, they want to count on themselves to find a new life after the disaster and to rebuild the village they remember by themselves. That power comes from the unique historical background and culture in Siao-Lin Village and the resident's affection for the land, and the group's mutual goal to preserve their culture. It also formed the recognition to reconstruct Siao-Lin Village to its original. The new environment and the group's motivation to preserve their culture come from Siao-Lin villager's true and precious power to reconstruct that deserves recognition.

The reconstruction built the original Siao-Lin Village into three new villages, but each one of them only represents one-thirds of its most original.

5. The Plains Aborigine Night festival of Siao-Lin Village after Typhoon Morak, 2013

In the village's activities, three villages each formed their own groups, such as the drum and drama performance in the first village, the dance and drum performance in the second village, and the spring plow performance in Siao-Ai Village. Attending the cultural performance, all of the group members not only form their unique culture but also innovate the original Siao-Lin culture and live with it. Siao-Lin villagers form the bond with the village through culture, and bring back their Plains Aborigines culture through cultural activities.

Figure 6. The New Konkai of Siao-Lin Village after Typhoon Morak., 2018



Figure 7. The Siao-Lin Village, 2008



Figure 8. The New First Siao-Lin Village after Typhoon Morak., 2011

Conclusion

Siraya's cultural landscape in Kaohsiung evolves around its representing element, public shrines. It is also evidence of the moves in the past due to historical events and political factors. The public shrines usually located independently in the countryside, hills and forests, which formed a unique feature in the space. The public shrines along the riverside of Erren River,

Nanzixian River and Laonong River are located in the boarding areas and forests, and became a part of the temples for Han Chinese. They merge with the surrounding environment and landscape, representing the positive interaction between villagers' lifestyle and the ecological environment. The annual night ceremonies for Siraya are how they preserve their traditional culture.

They still follow the rituals and ancestor's religion is the invisible cultural treasure when evaluating the value of their cultural landscape. Looking at the landscape from people, events, places and objects, it should be considered the ethnographic landscape category. Besides the intimate interaction between and the mysterious religion of aboriginal and Han Chinese culture, it has the characters of "gradually evolved landscape" and "associative cultural landscape."

After the Typhoon Morak disaster in 2009, many areas where Siraya of Plains Aborigines live were undergoing the adversity. The most seriously stricken area was Siao-Lin Village, the residency area of Tevorang Group of Siraya. From the research of the reconstruction of Siao-Lin Village in Kaohsi-

ung, the gap between the execution by governments of all level and the expectation of the villagers is noticeable. The gap mainly comes from the recognition of community reconstruction. The supplier focus on the physical housing construction and building permanent houses, and aims at the amount of houses built, the interior space of the houses, the public facilities in the community but neglected the people's and tribe's culture, the ecological environment or overall consideration on how to avoid invisible conflicts of the culture. It is not a mere physical object that is neglected in reconstruction of a community, but the whole villager's culture, religion, lifestyle, production mode, social relations and ethnic borders should all be taken into consideration. During the twelve-year period of reconstruction, Siao-Lin villagers devoted their own efforts and participated in physical and virtual reconstruction, which helped to bring the focus of reconstruction to combine people and environment. This include preserving the Siao-Lin Village terrain; the hardware construction of the ancestral worship and memorial park for the unfortunate ones who have died during the disaster and the reconstruc-

tion of three permanent housing communities, the Siao-Lin Heritage Museum, the Siao-Lin Elementary School, etc.; searching for the remaining agricultural lands and replant the traditional plants such as turmeric, bamboo shoots, and chicken horn (thistle) that are vital to the villagers' lives; the software reconstruction of the Plains Aborigine Night festival music group, the traditional cultural troupes such as the drum performance of the Siao-Lin Village, and the spring plow performance; and reestablishing the life culture of the Plains Aborigines and dance performances so beloved by the clan. Through architecture and ethnic culture reconstructions, an inseparable link has been created between the most important carrier (people), the land, and the environment. It is the only way to preserve and development their culture permanently, and the only way to continue their culture after the strike of the disaster.

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