

COMPLETION REPORT

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A Look at Pre-war Japanese Houses in the Philippines

This study explored the building performance and acculturation process evident in Japanese houses built or renovated in the Philippines before World War II. Through primarily the research of Prof. Sato Kan, the research aimed to understand whether Japanese immigrants adhered to their traditional construction practices and how they adapted these practices to the Philippine context.

Methodology

The research employed a mixed-method approach with the qualitative data and the base material for the quantitative data of the Japanese houses in the Philippines, or 'Balay-sang-Hapon', are based on the research of Sato Kan. The other house types that are compared against the 'Balay-sang-Hapon' are based on the thesis of Melva Java and Donn Hart. The 'Balay-sang-Hapon' are also compared against the American-period houses in the Philippines especially those referred to as 'Balay Ukit' or the carved-ornamented American-period houses. Based on the available plans by Sato Kan and the other houses in the Philippines, their similarities and differences are assessed using space syntax. The lighting simulations are only conducted to structures whose information is enough to reconstruct their basic mass.

Key Findings

The study revealed a fascinating interplay between tradition and adaptation. The key findings are:

- Continuity of Tradition: Japanese immigrants demonstrably incorporated their construction practices. The divisibility of house dimensions by the traditional "*ken*" measurement system suggests a conscious effort to maintain a familiar spatial organization.
- Adaptation to Climate: While integrating traditional elements like "*hakidashi mado*" (sliding windows) and "*irimoya*" (hip-gable roofs) among others, adjustments were made for the Philippine climate. These included increased floor heights (thermal comfort) and a shift towards beds instead of the traditional "*tatami*" mats for sleeping.
- Convergence with American-period houses in the Philippines: The layouts of Japanese houses in the Philippines displayed greater similarity to the "*Balay-Ukit*" than to the nipa huts or "*payag*" of the locals.
- Filipino cultural integration: Some Filipino customs were incorporated, such as combining toilets and baths into single rooms.

Conclusions: Acculturation through necessity and preference

The research highlights the concept of acculturation, where two cultures interact and influence each other.

- Areas of Adoption: Limitations in Philippine infrastructure forced some Japanese practices to be abandoned, particularly in rural areas. For instance, toilet designs and practices differed significantly from Japanese norms. Similarly, the hot and humid climate led to the abandonment of "*tatami*" mats.
- Areas of Insistence: The "*ken*" measurement system persisted, as well as the organization of spaces

e.g., the separation of the main areas from the servant areas among others, indicates a preference for a familiar spatial organization. Additionally, some elements like the “muso-mado” (window blinds) were actively incorporated, although their adoption of this specific element was not observed at present. The desire for traditional materials like roof tiles is also evident.

This study highlights how Pre-War Japanese immigrants negotiated their cultural identity through their built environment. They adapted their traditional practices to suit the local climate and infrastructure limitations, while retaining elements that provided a sense of familiarity and cultural continuity.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Currently being discussed with the University of San Carlos Publication House in Cebu Philippines. The current title is *“Shaping shapes that shape us: Balay-sang-Hapon”*