

Taiwanese Girls' Education, 1897-1945: An Analysis of Policy and Practice in a Gendered Colonial System

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Abstract: *In 1897, two years after its rise as an imperial power, Japan inaugurated an ambitious experiment to make modern Japanese citizens out of Han Taiwanese schoolgirls in its first overseas colony, Taiwan (1895-1945). To survive in a world surrounded by European and American imperialist powers, the Japanese government sought the acquisition and development of territories in East Asia. In Taiwan, the Japanese colonial government mobilized the local population with the slogan of assimilation (doka). The administration sought to assimilate all non-Japanese into becoming 'Japanese.' For its female subjects, there was an additional goal: the ideal of "good wife, wise mother" (ryosaikenbo).*

This study examines Han Taiwanese girls' education from 1897 to 1945, which reveals the fracturing of Taiwan schools along ethnic, gender, and class lines. It finds that colonial educational policy was deeply influenced by policy implemented in the metropole and by Japanese relations with other countries. The study concludes that schoolgirls and their families did not completely follow the colonial government's ideology on women's education. With the education and training they received in school, many schoolgirls became professionals instead of following the "good wife, wise mother" model. This study contributes to the conversation on transnational education in the colonial context— how the educational system in the metropole influenced the educational system in the colonies. It also seeks to understand how the colonial government sought to create an ideal woman citizen to serve the empire.