

A Reanalysis of *dōka* and Educational Policy in Colonial Taiwan in the Context of Modern Japanese Political Thought

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ABSTRACT

This paper reexamines the concept of *dōka*, commonly rendered as “assimilation,” by seeking to identify the distinguishing features of Japanese assimilation policy on Taiwan via a comparison with European and American assimilation policies and by reference to modern Japanese history. In order to dissect the principles and structure of *dōka* this article examines its relationship to modern Japanese political thought and ideas of language, in particular the concept of *kokutai* (polity) and the theory of language promoted by Ueda Mannen.

I argue that although *dōka* policy in colonial Taiwan was centered on the principles of civilization and culture it also had an intensely ideological and instrumental character. Both the instrumental and substantive aspects of *dōka* displayed a marked fluidity throughout time. Many of those who promoted assimilationist Japanese-language education used Ueda Mannen’s theories about the Japanese language to create an image of rule expressed by slogans such as “Toward imperial impartiality (*isshi dōzen*)” and “Toward Japaneseness (*nihon minzoku*).” Their attempts were motivated by the need to mend a perceived rupture in the Japanese polity brought about by the colonization of Taiwan and to maintain equilibrium of the overall imperial system. This was because rule over alien peoples contradicted the fundamental principles of a common ethnic heritage and equality of status among imperial subjects that were the foundation of the Japanese polity.

Dōka as extended to Taiwan is thus not completely equivalent to ideas of assimilation as generally understood in western colonial studies. Instead, it must be seen as a strategy of rule that was a product of the need to mimic, modify, and employ on Taiwan the basic principles upon which the Japanese polity was founded.

Keywords: *dōka* (assimilation), *kokutai* (polity), *isshi dōzen* (imperial impartiality), Ueda Mannen

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