

## A Discussion of the Kōsei Theater Society in Japanese Colonial Taiwan

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### ABSTRACT

Two drama movements were important in introducing the techniques and practices of western modern drama to colonial Taiwan. The first was the New Theater Movement, led by Taiwanese intellectuals in the 1920's as a part of the Cultural Enlightenment Movement; the second was the Youth Theater Movement, promoted and sponsored by the Japanese colonial government to reinforce its program of assimilation (*kōminka*) during the Pacific War. This paper discusses the Kōsei Theater Society that was established by Taiwanese intellectuals in 1943 with the aim of subverting the official discourse on drama during the Youth Theatre Movement.

The Taiwanese Literature group was composed of educated elites who availed themselves of the government's promotion of the Youth Theater Movement to organize the Kōsei Theater Society and put on public performances. Resisting the military propaganda associated with the Youth Theater Movement, the Kōsei's leaders emphasized the indigenous and realistic in their performances and aimed to draw a direct connection to the New Theater Movement of the 1920s.

From the perspective of development of modern Taiwanese theater, Kōsei reveals that wartime Taiwanese intellectuals were already reflecting on the subjectivity of Taiwanese theater under the assimilation movement. Because the Kōsei was able to be formed and put on performances in the midst of the Youth Theater Movement, we can say that the Kōsei resisted militaristic aesthetics and, consequently, subverted and expanded the government's intentions behind the Youth Theater Movement.

**Keywords:** assimilation (*kōminka*), New Theater Movement, Youth Theater Movement

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