

The Shaping of Colonial Administration in Taiwan under Japanese Rule: The Civil Service Examination, the Flow of Talents, and Colonial Administration in Japanese Colonial Empire

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ABSTRACT

This study primarily focuses on the statistical data on prewar Japan's civil service examinations, and it also attempts to evaluate the bureaucratic system and colonial administration of Japan's colonial empire. The paper consists of two parts. The first part examines prewar Japan's administrative divisions of the higher civil service examination, offers a comparison of Taiwan with Korea, and examines the flow of administrators in the empire, paying specific attention to the issue of examinations as a channel of social mobility with regard to successful Taiwanese candidates. The second part analyzes the complete list of all the available successful candidates of the lower civil service examinations annually held by the Governor-General from 1899 through 1944, highlights the structural changes in the ethnic ratios between Japanese and Taiwanese, and traces and maps the distribution of the Japanese in terms of their birthplaces in Japan proper. I conclude by suggesting that, first, the flow of administrators in Japan's colonial empire, in the case of successful candidates of the higher civil service examination, was limited to the circulation between the colony of appointment and Japan proper, thus only few managerial and technical cadres took up the role of colonial pioneers in the initial stage of the expansion of the empire. Second, the lower civil service examination, at least in the case of Taiwan, served only a very limited role in terms of providing a "ladder of success" for the lowest-level government officials or public officials. Indeed, other channels for promotion, such as seniority or evaluation by a professionally appointed committee, offered better alternative routes for "rising in society" in terms of social mobility. Third, while the bureaucratic system based on the organizational law of officials was an important mechanism for Japan's colonial administration, the crux of its operation in fact lay in the structure outside of the bureaucracy.

Keywords: civil service examination, colonial administration, bureaucracy, higher-ranking officials, lower-ranking officials