

Dissemination of Temperance Knowledge and Discipline of the Body in Japanese Colonial Taiwan: A Study Based on Personal Diaries

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dissemination of temperance knowledge from Europe and the United States to East Asia in the early 20th century, focusing on its impact on Taiwanese society, family life and bodily health. The research finds that anti-alcohol knowledge and modern drinking culture were simultaneously introduced to Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period. Under the influence of Japanese culture, traditional drinking habits of Han Chinese gradually transformed. Alcohol consumption became increasingly widespread, and a culture of indulgent drinking permeated daily life in Taiwan. At the same time, inspired by Japan's *Minor Drinking Prohibition Act*, the temperance movement gained momentum in Taiwan.

The dissemination of anti-alcohol knowledge unfolded in three stages. After the 1910s, medical knowledge concerning alcohol was extensively introduced to Taiwan, and drinking was increasingly framed as a health threat, even referred to as “alcohol harm” (*shuhai*). Subsequently, the concept of “alcohol harm” was emphasized to meet evolving social and national development needs. In the 1920s, as child-rearing and family values gained attention in Taiwanese society, the family became a central site for temperance education. After 1938, under a wartime regime, the *Minor Drinking Prohibition Act* was implemented. Public celebrations and government-sponsored events, in line with Japan's spirit of total mobilization, recast citizens' bodies as national resources subject to surveillance and discipline. The dissemination of temperance knowledge reshaped Taiwanese perceptions of bodily health, family harmony, and everyday life during wartime. Ultimately, under the coexistence of Japanese drinking culture and temperance ideology, Taiwanese society was caught in an enduring tension between indulgence and abstinence, pleasure and discipline.

Keywords: Temperance Movement, Discipline, Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Japan, Lin Hsien-tang, Huang Wang-cheng