

Living Experiences of Female Taiwanese in Manchuria (1905-1948)

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ABSTRACT

Studies on Taiwanese women in Manchuria have been scarce. The main reason is that Taiwanese scholars have little interest in Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet regime, even less so about Taiwanese who went there, and the least about females among them. In addition, related historical materials are scant because Taiwanese women in Manchuria at that time were mostly housewives and hence, quite unlikely to leave substantial public or official records. Only bits and pieces of information can be found in the general history of Japan and China. The materials used in this article include the Passport Record List (旅券下付表) of the Taiwan Governor-General's Office, name lists of alumni associations of girls' high schools, and oral history interviews of people involved. The exact number of Taiwanese women in Manchuria at that time could hardly be known and was estimated to approximate five to six hundred. Most of them went there because their husbands or relatives were there; some went as companions for sightseeing or business; only few went for work. Their average age was around thirty, the child-bearing age. They left their families/relatives back home and had to manage the entire family by themselves. Thus, some did hire help either from Taiwan or among the locals. Heavily engaged in household tasks, they had little contact with either the locals or the Japanese. Hence, it was essential for them to mingle with the Taiwanese. In addition, this article also provides information about their husbands, revealing that women who received higher education were usually married to physicians, government officials, or members of the semi-official Kokusaku Gaishia (国策会社/こくさくがいしゃ). Besides being housewives, a few of these women were physicians, and the most outstanding one was Hsieh Chiu-tzu (謝久子). She not only worked as a physician but also passed the high-level civil service examination of Manchukuo, and became the first female technical official from Taiwan. Others worked as teachers, pharmacists, nurses, midwives, and domestic helpers. Their collective

experience in Manchuria as well as how they faced the upheavals of post-war Soviet intervention, the Chinese civil war, and in due course returned to their hometown are all key topics of discussion. It was in 1905 that Japan occupied Port Arthur and Dalian, and 1948 was the last year for these women to return to Taiwan; hence, this article confines its discussion to the period between 1905 and 1948.

Keywords: Manchuria, Female Taiwanese, Girls' High School, Passport Record List