

Taiwanese Senior Officials in Manchukuo: The Case of Graduates from Tatung Academy

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ABSTRACT

Established in 1932, Tatung Academy (大同學院) was like a training institute for officials of the puppet government “Manchukuo”(「滿洲國」). Only those who passed the national examination for senior civil servants, as stipulated by the 1938 Decree for Civil Servants(文官令), could enrolled into Tatung Academy. The training period ranged from 6 to 12 months, followed by a year of internship.

Tatung Academy offered great attraction to Taiwanese during the Japanese colonial era. First, career opportunities in the colonial government were scarcely available for local Taiwanese who suffered unfavorable treatment. On the contrary, Manchukuo as an “emerging state” was in desperate need of talents with jobs that promised high salaries. In its first phase of establishment, Tatung Academy recruited mainly Taiwanese and Korean graduates from Japanese universities and technical schools. From 1933 to 1945, there were 25 Taiwanese graduating from Tatung Academy. The majority of enrollees in the second phase were Manchurian and Han graduates from high schools in Manchuria. During the seven years of this phase, there were four Taiwanese graduates. With the new system introduced in the second phase, the Academy took in mainly those who passed the promotion examination of senior civil servants and there was only one Taiwanese graduate. All 29 Taiwanese graduates eventually became senior officials in the Manchukuo government. After the Second World War, with the exception of one being dead and another opting to stay in the Mainland, all the remaining 26 graduates returned to Taiwan. However, their former service in the puppet regime posed obstacles for their being qualified for national and local examinations and their becoming civil servants in the Republic of China. Worse still, their previous years of service were not counted. Despite the initial setback upon their return to Taiwan, the capability and competence of these graduates coupled with their “Manchurian experience” eventually earned them both opportunities and status in post-war Taiwan.

The academics had devoted much attention to the Taiwanese involved in anti-Japanese organizations in Chongqing (重慶), showing little interest in these elites from Taiwan who had served in Manchukuo and their “Manchurian experience”. Comparatively, materials on the related history were also scarce. With reference to the Manchukuo Empire Official Gazette (《滿洲國政府公報》) and interview records, this study explores the establishment of Tatung Academy and its changing role after the promulgation of the Decree for Civil Servants in Manchukuo. Moreover, the reasons for the exodus of talents from Taiwan to Manchukuo, their experience, their return after World War II and their subsequent adaptations are also examined to shed light on this rather unique history of Taiwanese elites.

Keywords: Tatung Academy, Manchukuo, Taiwanese