

Framing the Specialty of Immunology in Postwar Taiwan: Medical Aids, Academic Diplomacy and Boundary Objects

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ABSTRACT

Immunological diseases, like allergic rhinitis, asthma and autoimmune disease, are irritating modern ailments in our modern society, and immunology provides the authoritative knowledge regarding how to deal or cope with these new medical conditions. Instead of studying the history of immunology in Taiwan as a natural consequence of advancement in biomedicine, this article situates immunology, the then new medical specialty, within the specific historical context and describes the historical agents that contributed to the establishment of immunology as a specialty in Taiwan. According to the primary materials collected from Witness Seminar, medical journals, and archive from the Chinese Society of Immunology, this article analyzes the resources and mechanisms behind the development and specialization of biomedicine in post-war Taiwan. The following interrelated questions are raised and discussed. First, what were the local context and social resources that enabled the institution of a new medical specialty (immunology)? Second, how did the new specialty build up its own resources and research topics, and negotiate a new boundary with the existing specialties (like bacteriology and microbiology)? Third, how and why specific historical actors of various existing specialties could work together to construct this new specialty? Finally, what was the relationship of this new specialty with local political and academic environment in post-war Taiwan, a developing country that eagerly absorbed advanced medical knowledge and system from Euro-American countries? This article argues that, while the development of immunology in Taiwan corresponds with the general specialization and institutionalization of immunology in the global context, local research networks, disease conditions and political environment also contributed significantly to the foundation of this new specialty, especially the medical aids and the political fights between Taiwan and P.R.C. in various international scientific unions in the 1970s. Moreover, it was boundary

objects like “self-recognition” and immunological measurement techniques that made it possible for actors with different disciplines and purposes to work together and establish the immunological specialty in Taiwan.

Keywords: Immunology, Allergy, Medical Aids, Boundary Objects, Academic Diplomacy