

## **Japanese and Cherry Blossoms in Colonial Taiwan: Discovery and Transplanting of “Inland Scenery” and Transformation of Discourses about Cherry Blossoms**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper attempts to trace the interaction between the Japanese colonizers and their colonized space with a focus on Taipei, the most densely populated area occupied by the Japanese. As a case study, the paper investigates the changing practices, concepts, and meanings of cherry-tree planting on Mount Grass (Yang Ming Mountain) in suburban Taipei. Drawing upon old newspapers, magazines, tour guides and reports, the paper also describes the changing contexts of, and the dynamics between, urban and suburban life.

The historical process of discovering, planting and transplanting cherry trees reveals that in the early stage of the colonial period, the Japanese viewed cherry blossoms as the symbols of their “motherland” and “home country.” The government’s early initiative of transplanting mainland cherry trees to Taiwan was also triggered by the idea of protecting some aspects of Japanese “inland (naichi) scenery” which they had found in Taiwanese “overseas territory (gaichi).” However, in the process of planting and transplanting, different symbols and meanings had become associated with cherry blossoms, i.e. Japanese tried to rationalize the unique image of “the country of the cherry blossom,” to project and even transplant mainland landscapes onto Taiwan, and to ultimately transform Taiwan into an extension of Japan Proper (naichienchō). By the 1920s, however, discourses emerged with a new idea of using cherry tree transplantation to encourage Japanese permanent settlement in Taiwan and to prevent the “Taiwanization (wanka)” of Japanese children on the island. Thus, the policy of planting cherry trees also responded to the challenge of several obstacles that the Japanese encountered in their overseas colonies. Nevertheless, the idea of using transplanted cherry trees to assimilate the Taiwanese and to enhance “nationalistic sentiments” did not become popular until the late 1930s.

The above-mentioned phenomena illustrate that landscape design not only involves power manipulation, but also reveals Japanese immigrants’ nostalgia and a

sense of crisis. As the Japanese anxiety intensified, they realized that living in an “overseas territory” did not necessarily mean securing permanent advantages for them. The interactions between people and space, between city and suburbia, and between colonial politics and mundane daily living reveal a much more complicated dynamic than simply a power paradigm between “the rulers and the ruled.”

**Keywords:** Japanese in Colonial Taiwan, cherry blossoms, scenery, landscape, Taipei, space, urban Life