

A Lost Moral World: Ethics Education in Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reconstruct and analyze the content of ethics (*shūshin* in Japanese) education in Taiwan's elementary schools during the period of Japanese rule (1896-1945). It also attempts, on the basis of surveys done by a school teacher of that time and by the author herself, to assess the effects of the ethics education in question. By analyzing the content of ethics education, this work draws mainly from second-phase ethics textbooks and relevant contemporary writings. Structurally, the first section of this article covers ethics education and ethics textbooks in modern Japan, because in many ways ethics education in Taiwan imitates its counterpart in Japan. The second section is a discussion of ethics education and ethics textbooks in colonial Taiwan in general. The work then goes on to treat the style of ethics textbooks and approaches in ethics education in Taiwan's elementary schools. The fourth section analyzes the distinctive features of the second-phase ethics textbooks used on this land. Finally, this article assesses the impact of ethics education. The author finds that ethics education in Taiwan was considerably successful in framing the mindset of young Taiwanese. One major reason is apparently that ethics education was closely linked to other courses, such as "national language" (i.e. Japanese) and "history," making it a crucial component of the overall school education. In conclusion, the author makes a preliminary comparison among ethics education in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea—the latter two being Japan's colonies—hoping to highlight the central features and significance of ethics education in colonial Taiwan.

Keywords: ethics education, *shūshin* textbooks, elementary schools in colonial Taiwan (for Taiwanese children), public morality

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