

## **Leprosarium and Social Identity of Leprosy Patients: The Social History of Leprosy in Colonial Taiwan**

Yen-chiou Fan

### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores why and how the self-identity and social identity of leprosy patients were established from the disease, leprosy, itself. Examining the history of leprosy in Japanese colonial Taiwan from the social constructivist perspective, this article further analyzes the social conditions that shaped the identity of disease sufferers over the years. These multi-facet social conditions including the modern (western) medical system, public health policy, missionary medical service, and the founding of leprosarium interacted to account for the formation and transformation of leprosy patients' self-identity and social identity. This study concluded with three main points. First, in the modern history of leprosy in Taiwan, the social identity of leprosy patients was formed only after Japanese rule. Second, most leprosy patients were transferred to two main kinds of institutions. One was run by the Japanese colonial government, like the Lo-Shen Leprosarium; and the other was administered by western missionaries or religious organizations, like the Happy Mountain Colony. The type of institution in which leprosy patients were resettled defined and determined largely their social identity. Finally, leprosy patients' own personal life experience constituted a major force behind the shaping of their own identity.

**Keywords: leprosarium, social identity of disease, Japanese colonial Taiwan, total institution, Lo-Shen Leprosarium, Happy Mountain Colony**