

Standing in the Gap of Society: Korean Prostitutes in Colonial Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Despite widely practiced, sex industry in Taiwan and Korea had never been put under governmental control. State-regulated prostitution in Taiwan and Korea began only under Japanese colonial rule. In the early colonial era, the Japanese government simply imposed relevant laws in Japan on these two newly acquired colonies, requiring brothels to be registered and prostitutes to undergo regular checks for several sexually transmitted diseases.

While previous studies on history of colonial Korea have widely agreed that traditional practices of sex industry in Korea had undergone significant changes under the Japanese, how state-regulated prostitution influenced the Taiwanese society has been overlooked by contemporary historians and researchers.

This study focuses primarily on Korean prostitutes working in colonial Taiwan from the 1920s onwards and explores the transformation of traditional sex industry in Taiwan under the colonial rule. Moreover, the cross-cultural gap between native Taiwanese customs and those of the Japanese colonial ruler is also examined.

Keywords: Cho-sen-ru (Korean brothel), State-regulated Prostitution, Sex Industry, Gray Zone