

The Sanitary Police: Documents from the Government-General of Taiwan

Translator: Evan N. Dawley, Goucher College

Introduction

The Japanese colonial regime on Taiwan (1895-1945), known as the Government-General of Taiwan (*Taiwan sōtokufu*; GGT), operated through a broad array of intrusive, coercive, and sometimes beneficial institutions, policies, and practices. One of the most significant areas in which we can see this combination of intensive state management and positive results for the lives of many of Taiwan's people is in the close alliance between the colonial police and the control of epidemic and endemic diseases. This particular case also reveals the degree to which the GGT relied upon the participation of local, non-Japanese residents in its pursuit of its goals, thus the possibilities that existed for those people to transform and resist the plans of Imperial Japan.

The documents below facilitate investigation into the creation, structure, and operations of the "sanitary police" (*eisei keisatsu*) in Taiwan.¹ The Office of Sanitation (*Eisei ka*) operated within, and was subordinate to, the colonial Police Department for most of the 50 years of Japanese rule. However, despite this alliance with the coercive wing of the civil administration of the GGT, the discovery, management, and eradication of waves of disease that swept over the island—bubonic plague in the early 1900s, cholera and influenza after World War II, persistent malaria and typhoid—depended upon a vast and dense network of non-governmental actors. These documents address the establishment of the police-and-sanitation alliance and the efforts to control specific outbreaks of disease: plague in 1902 and cholera in 1919. On their own, they can reveal much about how two immediate needs of the GGT—to manage the diseases hampering its efforts to establish rule, and to advance its authority over Taiwan—drove policy in an expanding fashion. At first, these demands linked epidemic and endemic disease to the colonial police force, and over time they shaped a collection of unions that merged public and private actors into a theoretically dense network of disease prevention. The documents also indicate the spaces that were open for non-Japanese to manipulate and reshape policy on the local level.

¹ I have borrowed the term "sanitary police" from Joseph C. Wicentowski's Ph.D. dissertation, which served as the inspiration for this selection of documents; see citation in the List of Secondary Readings.

The documents can be even more productively used to explore Taiwan's history and connect Japanese imperialism to the study of empire more generally, in conjunction with secondary scholarship. Existing books by Ruth Rogaski, Michael Shiyung Liu, and Miriam Ming-cheng Lo, as well as the research of Joseph Wicentowski, highlight that the modern practice of medicine and concept of hygiene were tools for, among other things, discrimination, especially in colonial and semi-colonial contexts. They also show the close connections between modern hygiene, state power, and projects for managing society, and also draw useful comparisons between the Japanese and other empires and modern nation-states. Wicentowski's work is especially useful for case studies of the two specific disease outbreaks addressed in the document. Students might find the short essays by Paul Barclay and Evan Dawley helpful to understand the broader context of Taiwan's history in this era. In addition, Ka Chih-ming and Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai's works have more information on the structure of the GGT and its security forces. Full references are in the list of sources below.

However one uses these documents, readers should ask themselves these questions as they go through them:

- 1) What do the documents reveal about Japanese views of disease, sanitation, and Taiwan and its residents in the early twentieth century?
- 2) What made sanitation such an important idea or practice for advancing state power in colonial settings and modern nation-states in general?
- 3) Who was susceptible to these diseases, and how did that susceptibility affect the sanitation police?
- 4) What do the documents reveal about the agency and activities of people in Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule?

Citation

"Records of the Government-General of Taiwan." Translated by Evan N. Dawley. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

Citation of Original Sources (In Order of Document)

"Permission for the Division of Operations in the Sanitation Office." July 9, 1898. T0797_01_001_0364. Digitized Archives of the Government-General of Taiwan, Institute of Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan. <http://tais.ith.sinica.edu.tw/sinicafrsFront/browsingLevel1.jsp?xmlId=00003209>

[92](#). Translated by Evan N. Dawley. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

“Sanitation – Epidemic and Endemic Disease: 1 Report to the Minister of Interior on the Plague Conditions and Other Matters from January through April (1902).” May 31, 1902. T0797_02_001_0247. Digitized Archives of the Government-General of Taiwan, Institute of Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

<http://tais.ith.sinica.edu.tw/sinicafrsFront/browsingLevel1.jsp?xmlId=00003209>

[92](#). Translated by Evan N. Dawley. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

“Police – Epidemic and Endemic Disease: 8 The Establishment of the Xiluo Disease-Prevention Union.” April 15, 1919. T0797_01_010_0018]. Digitized Archives of the Government-General of Taiwan, Institute of Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan:

<http://tais.ith.sinica.edu.tw/sinicafrsFront/browsingLevel1.jsp?xmlId=00003209>

[92](#). Translated by Evan N. Dawley. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

List of Secondary Readings

Barclay, Paul D. “Japanese Empire in Taiwan.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, edited by David Ludden. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020; <https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory>

Dawley, Evan. “Taiwan in Transformation: The Japanese Colonial Era.” In *Assessing the Landscape of Taiwan and Korean Studies in Comparison*, edited by J. Bruce Jacobs, Niki J.P. Alford, and Sojin Lim. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021: 50-73.

Ka, Chih-ming. *Japanese Colonialism in Taiwan: Land Tenure, Development, and Dependency, 1895-1945*. City: Westview Press, 1995.

Liu, Michael Shiyung. *Prescribing Colonization: The Role of Medical Practices and Policies in Japan-Ruled Taiwan, 1895-1945*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2009.

Lo, Ming-cheng M. *Doctors Within Borders: Profession, Ethnicity, and Modernity in Colonial Taiwan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Ts'ai, Hui-yu Caroline. *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building: An Institutional Approach to Colonial Engineering*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Wicentowski, Joseph C. "Policing Health in Modern Taiwan, 1895-1949." Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University Department of History, 2007.

Document 1: “Permission for the Division of Operations in the Sanitation Office” (July 9, 1898)

Divisions of the Sanitation Office and Their Areas of Operation

- 1) The Protection Division, Medical Affairs Division, and Opium Division are established within the Sanitation Office

The Division of Protection’s duties are to prevent epidemic diseases and endemic diseases and take on other matters related to public health, as well as other affiliated activities (limited to matters related to personnel and classified activities)

The Medical Affairs Division’s duties are matters of medical practice, medicines, and non-prescription medicines.

The Opium Division’s duties are matters related to opium.

- 2) In each Division, a Division Chief will be appointed by the Sanitation Office Director, who will also determine their main responsibilities.

[Source: Digitized Archives of the Government-General of Taiwan, accessed through the Institute of Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan: <http://tais.ith.sinica.edu.tw/sinicafrsFront/browsingLevel1.jsp?xmlId=000320992>. Record Number: T0797_01_001_0364.]

Document 2: “Sanitation – Epidemic and Endemic Disease: 1 Report to the Minister of Interior on the Plague Conditions and Other Matters from January through April (1902)” (May 31, 1902)

We are submitting this report to the Vice Minister of the Interior about the investigation into the conditions of plague disease and the disease prevention and sanitation measures in Taiwan, between January and April of 1902... [ending and name illegible]

“Conditions of Plague Disease and Disease Prevention in Taiwan from January through April, 1902”

Regarding plague disease in Taiwan this year, the [one illegible character] outbreak originated last winter in the north and south, and ultimately the disease spread and continued [to occur]. This year, following the [two illegible characters] of the temperature, we reached a situation in which the intensity of the disease declined and its spread slowed. We are now submitting this special report as a general outline of the conditions of the disease and the measures of prevention and eradication.

The locations at which cases of the disease appeared from the beginning of January to the end of April have primarily been located in both the north and south, and in the center there have also been a small number of cases in Beigang [and] in Douliu Prefecture...²

The cases in the north were located in Jilong (Keelung), Taipei, Shenkeng, and Taoziyuan; in the south, cases appeared in each of the prefectures of Tainan, Linshuigang, Jiayi, and Fengshan.³ Regarding the jurisdictions in which it spread, and the areas that had a lot of cases, in particular there was Taipei City within Taipei Prefecture. In addition, it spread little by little to other locations, but its widespread prevalence has not been observed.

However, when looking at the disease conditions and available statistics for Linshuigang Prefecture, the conditions in the areas where it is spreading seem to be following the pattern of Taipei. In fact, in one town there was an unknown number of cases in fifteen locations, there has certainly been limited transmission, and we have heard that there has been acknowledgment of large-scale transmission. In both places preventive measures and disinfection have achieved their results, and the virulence of the disease has been declining. As for last year's transmission and virus reduction in Taipei, early on there was infestation within the city wall, in Mengjia, and in Dadaocheng. The spread of infected persons was observed beginning in January, and by the middle of March the virulence of the disease intensified and became more serious and the number of

² Beigang (Peikang) is located in the southern half of Taiwan, a little north of Jiayi (Chiayi). Douliu (Touliu) is slightly to the northeast of Beigang.

³ The first four places were all towns or small cities in northern Taiwan in 1902, and the latter four were prefectures in the southwest. Taoziyuan is now known as Taoyuan.

infected persons increased; it became a terrible sight.⁴ At this time, extreme measures were put into effect for eradicating the disease, and a special quarantine bureau was opened in Taipei Prefecture, concentrating solely on prevention and treatment, and from this time the virulence of the disease declined. According to current conditions, we report that it has been completely extinguished, and in addition in the days ahead we must give this careful consideration.

Currently, the disease conditions in each prefecture are as follows:

Jilong Prefecture

The disease emerged in several areas within the jurisdiction of Jilong Prefecture. In the town of Jilong and the three affiliated villages of Sheliaodao, Xiantong, and Tianliaogang, there were 25 cases between January and April. As for the virulence, it spread very slowly, but until it is completely eradicated in the future, some cases will appear.

Taipei Prefecture

The disease emerged in several areas within the jurisdiction of Taipei Prefecture. In four towns and two districts of the area within the wall—Mengjia, Dadaocheng, Huwei, Xinzhuang, and Banqiao—there were 308 total cases.⁵ Within these cases, among the Japanese there were 52 males and 36 females, whereas among the islanders, there were 102 males and 113 females. As for the virulence, outside of the inner city, in Mengjia, and Dadaocheng, we only know that in Dadaocheng there was a moderate rate, but we do not know about transmission conditions in the other.

[There is also a short section on conditions in Taoziyuan that is not translated here.]

[Source: Digitized Archives of the Government-General of Taiwan, accessed through the Institute of Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan:]

⁴ Mengjia and Dadaocheng were independent towns outside of the walled city of Taipei, until the GGT knocked down most of the wall and incorporated them into the city.

⁵ Huwei is today's Danshui. The total of 308 does not match the numbers in the next sentence, but it was unclear where the error was.

<http://tais.ith.sinica.edu.tw/sinicafrsFront/browsingLevel1.jsp?xmlId=000320992>. Record Number: T0797_02_001_0247]

Document 3: “Police – Epidemic and Endemic Disease: 8 The Establishment of the Xiluo Disease-Prevention Union” (April 15, 1919)⁶

{page 45}

From the Director of the Sanitation Office to the Director of Police Headquarters and the Director of the Finance Bureau
Directive Number 9318

Jiayi Prefecture

Taishō 8, March 27: Permission granted for the petition for the establishment of the Xiluo Disease-Prevention Union, document 1641.1 from the Jiayi Police Bureau.

Year Month Day Government-General

{page 46}

Taishō 8 March 31

Jiayi Prefecture

Division of Civil Administration, Police Headquarters

[Illegible name]

Regarding the Disease Prevention Union

March 20, 1919, In [document] number 271 from the Tenth Brigade, regarding the establishment of the Xiluo Disease-Prevention Union... (One full line, two partial lines omitted)

{page 47}

Taishō 8 March 17

Jiayi Prefecture Aiga Terusato⁷

To the Honorable Taiwan Governor-General Akashi Motojirō

⁶ This document is one of five in the same folder about the establishment of a disease-prevention union in some part of Taiwan.

⁷ Aiga Terusato was the magistrate of Jiayi Prefecture.

Application in Regard to the Establishment of the Disease-Prevention Union

Regarding Xiluo in the aforementioned prefecture, for the remaining matters like the future establishment of sanitation unions, and relying on several other sanitation institutions, at this time we request permission for the establishment of Disease-Prevention Unions for the prevention of infectious disease and endemic disease, throughout the jurisdiction of Xiluo and its affiliated villages of Xinzhuang, Zhekou, Buxin, and Jiadong.

We request permission as above.

In this jurisdiction, there are 2,068 households and 11,104 people.

{page 48}

“Bylaws of the Xiluo Disease Prevention Union”

{pages 49-53}

Bylaws of the Xiluo Disease Prevention Union

Chapter 1 General Regulations

Section 1: This union is named the Xiluo Disease Prevention Union

Section 2: The office of this association is established at Jiayi Prefecture, Xiluo County, Xiluo Town, number 561.

Section 3: This union will be connected to Xiluo County and Xiluo Town. The following notes indicate the offices of the union’s jurisdictions:

Notes

- 1) Xiluo County, Xiluo Town: one group
- 2) Xiluo County, Xinshezhuang: one group
- 3) Xiluo County, Shekouzhuang: one group
- 4) Xiluo County, Puxinzhuang: one group
- 5) Xiluo County, Jiadongzhuang: one group

Section 4: The goals of this union are to carry out the suppression and prevention of all designated infectious diseases and all endemic diseases, according to the designation of the Government-General of Taiwan, along with other responsibilities as ordered by the relevant authorities; and to plan for the good health of union members.

Section 5: The jurisdiction of the union will be determined by the relevant civilian authorities. However, upon the establishment of its administration, the area of jurisdiction will be divided such that each collection of 100 households will constitute one unit of jurisdiction, and in each jurisdiction the *baozheng* will establish one commissioner.⁸

Section 6: The union's director will represent the union and will manage its operations on the basis of the bylaws.

The union's vice-director will serve under the director and will act on behalf of the director at times when the director should be unable to do so.

The commissioners will carry out the business of the association within their jurisdiction under the direction of the director.

Section 7: In addition to the residences within the jurisdiction, each shop and factory, and each structure that the union uses [in its operations], will be considered as one household.

Section 8: The union director, vice-director, and commissioners are purely honorary offices.⁹

Section 9: The association, within the limits of its finances, will have paid clerks and officers.

⁸ The *baozheng* was a position of local leadership within a security system known as the *baojia* in Chinese or *hokkō* in Japanese. Originated by China's various dynasties, the GGT developed it in Taiwan into a more effective method of incorporating local residents into a mutual security system that paralleled the regular colonial police force and was also used in a number of social welfare and social management projects.

⁹ Someone, probably the author of the document, inserted an illegible phrase into this line between the words "director" and "vice-director".

However, their employment will be at the discretion of the director.

Section 10: The clerks will engage in work and activities as assigned by the director. The officers will engage in various responsibilities under the direction of the director.

Section 11: The staff members and office staff of the union will be able to enter the homes and affiliated structures of the union in order to carry out their duties.

Section 12: The union director is able to establish [one illegible word] regulations if needed in the course of carrying out operations.

Chapter 2

Section 13: The union's general meetings have two categories:

- Regular General Meeting
- Special General Meeting

Section 14: The regular general meeting will take place once each year, and the special general meetings will be held under the following circumstances:

- 1) When a meeting is called by the competent authorities in charge
- 2) When the union director determines that it is necessary
- 3) When over two-thirds of the members request one with a reason for an assembly or a purpose for a meeting

Section 15: The union's general meetings will consist of the director, vice director, and commissioners, and the director will serve as the Chair. If the director has experienced difficulties, the vice director will serve in their place as Chair.

The decisions of the general meeting will be made by votes of over half of the attending members, and if the votes for and against are equivalent, the Chair will be the deciding vote.

Section 16: The general meeting can be held when more than two-thirds of the members are in attendance.

Section 17: At the general meeting, resolutions or approval must be given on the following matters:

- 1) On matters related to estimates of income and expenditure
- 2) [Illegible]
- 3) On matters regarding the discharge of union finances
- 4) On matters regarding the union's expenses
- 5) On matters regarding directives from the competent authorities
- 6) On important matters in the union's budget
- 7) On matters regarding changes to the union's regulations

Section 18: Regarding the general meetings, the competent authorities should be notified two days before the meeting opens.

Section 19: When the elements of the general meetings' resolutions need to be announced, and a general meeting needs to be hurriedly convened, the union director is able to do so.

However, in these cases, for the implementation (of the resolutions), a general meeting must be called.

Section 20: The criteria of the resolutions of the union meeting must be reported to the competent authorities within five days after the closure of the meeting. At this time, they must be displayed at a designated location, so that they can be generally known.

Chapter 4 The Work of the Union

Section 21: The activities of this union are stipulated as follows:

- 1) Matters regarding preventive medicines for designated contagious diseases.
- 2) Matters regarding the drafting of local defense plans under the guidance of the Taiwan Government-General
- 3) Matters regarding the cleaning of roads and the dredging of public and private drainage/sewers.

- 4) Matters regarding the sprinkling of water on roads.¹⁰
- 5) Matters regarding the announcement of disease prevention.
- 6) Matters regarding the proceedings of the union meeting.
- 7) Matters regarding the management of public restrooms, the removal of members' sewage, and preventive medicine.
- 8) Matters regarding the disposal of waste from the cow and pig pens within the jurisdiction.
- 9) Matters regarding streetlights.
- 10) Other matters as necessary and determined.

Section 22: This union's ancillary duties are established as follows:

Matters regarding the use of the waste from cow and pig pens, the refuse from streets, and other refuse as fertilizer.

Section 23: [Illegible heading]:

- 1) The union should organize the cleaning of the sewerage, latrines, and waste containers inside and outside of people's homes.
- 2) The members of the disease-prevention union responsible for cleaning wastewater areas should [three characters illegible] in consultation with the households, local residents, and landlords, clean those areas from time to time and provide clean water.
- 3) When there are cases of infectious disease, or people suspected of suffering from it, [the members of the union should] directly inform the police officers as well as the officers of the union and await disease prevention measures under the guidance of the competent authorities.
- 4) In order to prevent malaria, [the union should] enact measures to address the circumstances and places that are conducive to the emergence and dwelling of mosquito varieties.
- 5) In regards to the disposal of the sewage of union members, a committee will be established within the disease prevention union. Compensation will be provided.

¹⁰ Since most of Taiwan's roads at this time were unpaved, this most likely refers to spraying water in order to keep the dust down during dry periods.

- 6) In matters regarding the construction of cow and pig pens, [the union should] establish measures for those animals that are born sick.
- 7) The cow and pig pens sometimes need to be cleared out and sanitized. Moreover, regarding the waste and refuse within the pens, measures will be taken to use it as the base material for fertilizer production under the management of the union. Compensation will be provided.
- 8) Regarding waste, [the union] must designate a location for its disposal.
- 9) In addition to these items, whatever procedures and matters as should be determined by the union officers or police and officials.

[There is also a section on the union's finances that is not translated here.]

[Source: Digitized Archives of the Government-General of Taiwan, accessed through the Institute of Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan:
<http://tais.ith.sinica.edu.tw/sinicafrsFront/browsingLevel1.jsp?xmlId=000320992>. Record Number: T0797_01_010_0018]