

How to Eliminate the Indigenous in Three Simple Steps; Japan's Early "Native" Policy in Colonial Taiwan

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Abstract

Japan occupied Taiwan as a result of its unexpected victory over China (1894-5). Taiwan's remote interior was the homeland of the island's 9 major aboriginal tribes. The three largest, the Ami, the Paiwan and the Atayal, make up to this day 85% of all aborigines. The more "advanced" tribes were living in the lowland area, paid taxes in kind to Beijing and practiced agriculture whereas the more turbulent "raw savages" survived by hunting in the forests and mountains having minimal contact with the settler society or the imperial Chinese state. The first contact with these tribes occurred during Japan's colonization effort of Taiwan in 1874 but it was in 1895, after the island's annexation, that the Japanese started implementing a strategy of gradual annihilation. This presentation will shed some light on the different phases and strategies that Tokyo put into effect to deal once and for all with the "native problem" in Taiwan.

Keywords: Meiji Japan, Japanese colonialism, Japanese Taiwan, Indigenous peoples, extermination