

# Landscapes of National Parks in Taiwan During the Japanese Colonial Period

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## I. Introduction

This paper will discuss the politics of national park landscapes in the case of Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period. Generally speaking, it has been pointed out that mountains, valleys, and forests were selected as national park landscapes in prewar Japan. Therefore these landscapes were thought of as being equivalent to Japanese nationalism in the modern period, which was seen, for example, in the discussions of Shigetaka Shiga, who was a famous Japanese nationalist geographer. His most important book “*The theory of Japanese Landscape*” (1894), was very influential in creating the notion of the Japanese landscape in the modern Japanese mind, and he insisted that Japanese landscapes were symbolized by mountains. In fact, three national parks in Taiwan that were selected under the Japanese colonization were also symbolized by the mountain landscapes.

However, in the case of Taiwan, two conditions were different from those of other Japanese national parks. Firstly, Taiwanese national parks were developed in the colonial areas of Imperial Japan<sup>1)</sup>, and they were selected through other decision making agencies and processes. That is, the Taiwan National Parks were selected by the Taiwan Colonial Government that was supervised by the Ministry of Colonial Department of Imperial Japan. Another national parks that were on the mainland of Japan, which was called “*Nai-chi*”<sup>2)</sup>, were selected by the Ministry of Interior. Secondly, Taiwan had many tropical landscapes, so the natural landscape feature of Taiwan was not necessarily mountain landscapes. In other words, the features of Taiwanese natural landscape risked distorting the imagined nationalistic Japanese landscape.

Because of these marginal conditions, there were a lot of discussions in the decision-making process concerning Taiwanese national parks. Documentations of these discussions allow us to understand why these landscapes were selected, what aspects were considered in these selections, what kinds of images were projected onto these national park landscapes, and how the definition of Taiwanese imaginative geography was discussed.

## II. The Selection Process

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In *Nai-chi*, the discussion of national parks began in 1911, the National Parks Association was established in 1927, the Law of National Parks was proclaimed in 1931, and twelve national parks having the characteristics of mountain landscapes were selected between 1934 to 1936.

In Taiwan, the Taiwan Colonial Government first assigned Tsuyoshi Tamura, who had played important roles in selecting national parks in *Nai-chi*, to the investigation of mountain areas around the Ari and the Nitaka mountains in 1928(see Fig. 1). After that, some local administrative organizations and influential persons organized national park societies which aimed that mountains where located inside or near their administrative district would be included in the Taiwan National Parks; the Arisan National Park Society established by the Chiayi (*Kagi*) city office in April 1931, the East Taiwan National Park Advertising Society established in the Hualien (*Karen*) port state in November 1931, the Taitun (*Taiton*) National Park Society established mainly by the Taipei (*Taihoku*) state office in 1934. As for the system of selecting and designating the Taiwan National Parks, the Taiwan Colonial Government established the National Parks Investigative Board composed of governmental bureaucrats in 1933. After that, it proclaimed the Law of Taiwan National Parks and set up the Taiwan National Parks Committee in 1935, that was attended by the bureaucrats, the local intellectuals, and Tamura. Finally, the Taiwan Colonial Government designated three Taiwanese national parks in 1937: The Taitun National Park, which was located in the northern area of Taipei city and which became the smallest national park in Japan; The Tsugitaka-Taroko National Park, which was located in the east area of Taiwan island and which became the largest national park in Japan; and The Nitaka-Arisan National Park, which was located almost in the center of Taiwan island and which contained the highest mountain in Japan<sup>3)</sup> (see Figure 1).

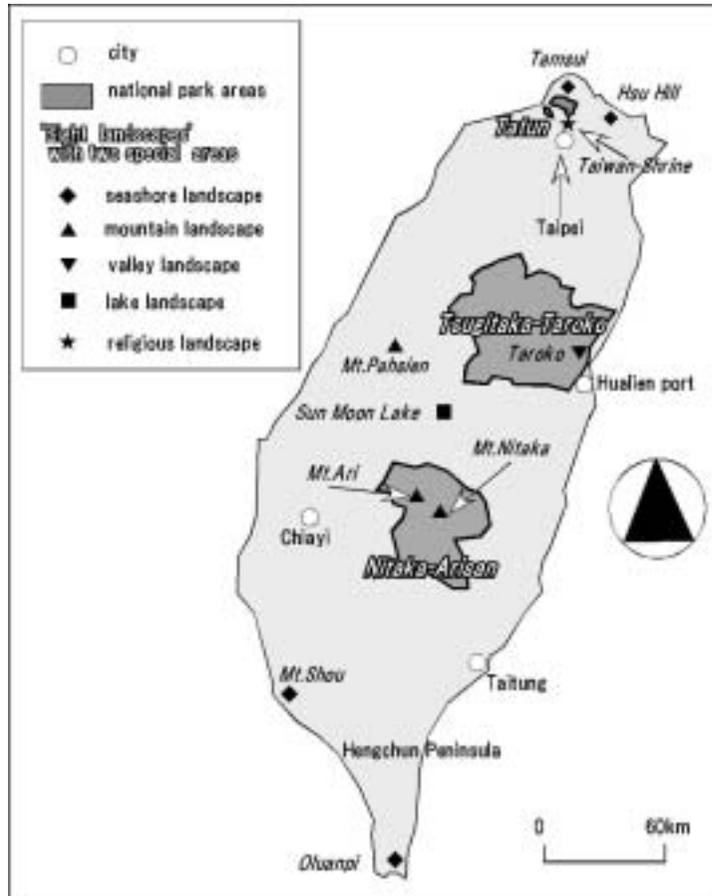
Thus, the selection process of Taiwanese national parks was basically executed by resources from the *Nai-chi*; *Nai-chi* ideas, *Nai-chi* ways, and *Nai-chi* personnel. However, because the selection was made under unique circumstances, an opportunity occurred which was discussion about Taiwanese national parks among the local intellectuals living in Taiwan, the bureaucrats of the Taiwan Colonial Government, and Tsuyoshi Tamura. This was the first meeting of the Taiwan National Park Committee and took place in 1936.

### III. The Arguments at the first meeting of the Taiwan National Parks Committee in 1936<sup>4)</sup>

On February 3, 1936, the first meeting of the Taiwan National Parks Committee was held with the chief of the Taiwan colonial government, 14 bureaucrats of the government, 15 local intellectuals, and Tamura.

First, the chief of the government explained that by protecting and developing natural landscapes, the national parks could serve two purposes, namely, training the minds and bodies of Japanese subjects and attracting foreign visitors so as to repay the international debt.

The bureaucrats nominated three candidate national park areas, called Taitun, Tsugitaka-Taroko, and Nitaka<sup>5)</sup>, which had been previously selected at the second meeting of the National Parks Investigative Board in 1934. One bureaucrat said that the selection standard in



**Fig. 1** Location map of main cities, the Taiwan National Parks, and the Eight Landscapes in Taiwan

*Nai-chi* was applied to Taiwan, meaning that natural and grand landscapes which symbolized the great Japanese Empire were selected to flaunt Japanese superiority and to have the charm which could attract tourists from all over the world. However, I notice these areas had something in common, that is, only mountain landscapes were selected.

Nine years before, the Taiwan Daily Newspaper Publishing Company (*Taiwan Nichi Nichi shin-po*) conducted a popularity contest of 'The Eight Landscapes of Taiwan'. These were the Hsu Hill (*Asahigaoka*), the Tamsui (*Tansui*), the Pashien Mountain (*Hassenzan*), the Sun Moon Lake (*Nichigetsutan*), the Ali Mountain (*Arisan*), the Shou Mountain (*Kotobuki-yama*), the Oluanpi (*Garanpi*), and two more special holy landscapes which were the Taiwan Temple (*Taiwan gin-ya*) and the Nitaka Mountain (*Nitakayama*). Classifying these landscape types by referring to comments written by intellectuals at the time, four areas can be thought as seashore landscapes, while only three areas can be thought of as mountain landscapes (see Fig. 1). Thus, popular natural landscapes for the people living in Taiwan did not be limited mountain landscapes.

However, landscape areas above seashore were not included in Taiwanese candidate national park areas. In particular, the Oluanpi was the most popular site in the contest but was not included among the national parks during the Japanese colonial period and instead was included in the first national park called Kenting selected by the Republic of China in 1982. On the other hand, the Tatun Mountain was nominated among the candidate national park areas by the board merely for being a mountain, in spite of the fact that it was not selected in 'The Eight Landscapes of Taiwan' and was too small to call a grand landscape.

Responding to the committee's suggestions, some local intellectuals living in Taiwan stated their objections. Several intellectuals expressed their belief concerning the reduction of the number of national parks: for example, one wanted to create only one national park to express the pride of Taiwan; another believed in combining the Nitaka and the Tsughitaka-Taroko because these two were too close to each other and had similar mountain landscapes; and another believed in removing Tatun which was too small and had no qualifications as a national park. However, Tamura refuted the idea that national parks had to be selected by one regular policy in Japan, so the number of national parks in Taiwan was suitable because there were three national parks in the Kyushu Island which was about the same size as the Taiwan Island.

The other main discussion was about which landscapes had to be included in Taiwanese national parks. Ichiro Hayasaka, a professor at Taipei Imperial University and a famous paleontologist, said that the distinctive characteristic of Taiwan was found in the tropical landscapes which were seldom seen in other Japanese areas and which were important tourist sites. As a result, Taiwanese national parks had to include the southern area of Taiwan which was rich with coral reefs and tropical rain forests. However, Shohkou Kohama, a director of the Bureau of Interior of the Taiwan Colonial Department who played an important role in selecting national parks in Taiwan, said that national parks in *Nai-chi* were mostly mountain landscape areas because their use was to train the mind and body of Japanese subjects. Tamura also refuted the idea that national parks were not tourist spots. On the other hand, Hayasaka maintained that tropical landscape areas in southern Taiwan were not only tourist spots but also places to train the body. He also argued that if *Daisetsuzan* in Hokkaido was selected because of its glaciers, then Taiwanese national parks should include tropical landscapes. However, the chief of the department did not acknowledge these objections, and the initial three candidate areas were selected as national parks.

#### **IV. Imaginative Geographies, Positionalities, and Scale Politics about the Taiwan National Parks**

After the first meeting of the Taiwan National Parks Committee, many the participants and interested others contributed articles to 'The Special Number of the Taiwan National Parks' in the magazine 'The Forest in Taiwan' published in July 1936. In these articles, we can see different imaginative geographies depending on their positionalities, which were often related to scale politics.

The first article in this volume was 'The Mission of the National Parks' written by Kohama (1936). He pointed out that the Taiwanese characteristic landscapes were beautiful mountain

landscapes, which had the power to discipline the Japanese subject's aesthetic sentiment. The second article was 'The Mission of the Taiwan National Parks' written by Tamura (1936). He argued that the most important purpose of the National Parks was not to attract tourists but to train the minds and bodies of Japanese subjects by introducing them to the grand nature and involving them in it. Moreover, he emphasized that the people living on level ground in Taiwan had to go to the highlands of the Taiwan National Parks so that their minds and bodies could recuperate and so that they could develop their spirits since their minds and bodies had become weak due to the tropical climate. These two articles illustrated the main landscape, image, ideology, and logic of the Taiwan National Parks. Much of these were the same as other Japanese national parks, but tropical climate and imaginative geography made the mountains more important for the national parks in the case of Taiwan under the idea of environmental determinism.

### 1. Hayasaka's critique

On the other hand, Hayasaka (1936b) criticized three candidate national park areas in an article called 'The Request for the Project of the Taiwan National Parks' that appeared in the same magazine as the one referred to above. He pointed out that the selection processes of the Taiwan National Parks had to be criticized especially in terms of the tropical landscape was ignored by the bureaucrats in the Taiwan Colonial Government and by Tamura despite the earnest opinions of scientists who had majored in various specialized field in Taiwan and who had emphasized the importance of tropical landscapes which were thought as the best characteristic of Taiwan in Imperial Japan. Hayasaka also argued that the national parks had to be selected by thinking not only in terms of domestic but by thinking globally, because national parks had to attract not only Japanese people but also foreign tourists.

Three months prior to this, Hayasaka had written a more-detailed and longer paper than the article, namely 'The Request for the Project of the Taiwan National Parks' (1936a). In this paper, he expressed his belief that the most important duty of national parks was to preserve the grand nature, and he referred to the idea of national parks in the United States of America which advocated the no-destruction and the preservation of nature for people's enjoyment in the future. He then made the following points:

- 1) There was almost no difference between the Tsugitaka-Taroko National Park and the Nitaka-Arisan National Park from the point of view of physical geography, geology, and botany.
- 2) It was not necessary to select Tatun as a national park because there were similar and larger volcano mountain landscapes in Japan.
- 3) In some of the reports by the National Parks Investigative Board and Tamura, it was frequently pointed out that botanical conditions changed from the tropical plant zone at the bottom part to the frigid plant zone at the top part in both the national parks of Tsugitaka-Taroko and Nitaka-Arisan. Hearing their opinions, I believed that they paid attention to the tropical characteristics in Taiwan and wanted to introduce these characteristics into the Taiwan National Parks. But I did not think there were real tropical landscapes in these areas. Referring to the climate classification devised by Köppen, real tropical landscapes were seen only in areas where the average monthly temperature was over 18°C. In Taiwan, these areas were only around the Hengchun (*Koushn*) Peninsula which

was south of Taitung (*Taiton*) city. Thus, it was careless of the National Parks Investigative Board to exclude real tropical landscape areas from the Taiwan National Parks. If these areas were included, the Taiwan National Parks would get a characteristic symbolic landscape under the special scales of both Imperial Japan and globally.

- 4) I thought that two areas must be selected in the Taiwan National Parks. The first was the main part of the areas of the Tsugitaka-Taroko and the Nitaka-Arisan. The second was the southward areas of Taiwan Island, namely real tropical landscape areas in the Hengchun Peninsula.
- 5) It was said that the Hengchun Peninsula area had no landscape beauty, but I thought we needed to be aware that this opinion was not so much objective as subjective. Thus, there were deviations in Tamura's or other national park specialist's view of landscape aesthetics, because they were scientists of forestry. Consequently, they did not notice real tropical landscapes in the Hengchun Peninsula and paid attention instead to tropical-like landscapes in the Tsugitaka-Taroko National Park and the Nitaka-Arisan National Park.
- 6) Although it was said that mountains were useful for the nourishment of the national soul, the selection process was in fact influenced by concession hunters who wanted to develop the local areas. Thus, I feel that the mountain landscapes were chosen because of secular motivations rather than holy inspirations. Why was it thought that these national parks were useful for the nourishment of the national soul?
- 7) It was regrettable that the areas of the Taiwan National Parks were selected by ignoring many of the physical and human scientists who lived on Taiwan Island.

Hayasaka believed that Taiwanese national parks should include tropical landscapes. As a paleontologist he believed in the conservation of nature. He also believed that in order to attract tourists, Taiwan's geographical characteristics had to be emphasized. Because these assertions relied on global and Taiwan island spatial scales, his opinion was in sync with other Taiwanese intellectuals who hoped to claim Taiwanese identity and to attract tourists. However, they were refuted and ignored by Tamura and Kohama who wanted to exalt nationalism and to produce homogenized national space. In other words, these confrontations clearly embodied scale politics.

## 2. Tamura and Tourism

Although Tamura denied the role of tourist attraction at the first meeting of the Taiwan National Parks Committee in 1936, in 'The Report of the Ari Mountain Landscapes' (Tamura, 1930), he discussed the importance of tourism and said the Ari Mountain which was one of the core areas of national parks in Taiwan, must become a worldwide tourist spot to attract not only Japanese but also foreigners. Moreover, in 'The Landscape of Taiwan' (Tamura, 1928), which was an essay of his first trip to Taiwan in 1928, he imagined, as a tourist, that Taiwan resembled Hawaii which he thought was a southern paradise, and said Taiwanese plants were similarly tropical. As Hayasaka pointed out, Tamura paid attention to tropical plants in the Ari Mountain without going to the Hengchun Peninsula.

Tourism was important not only for Japanese intellectuals living in Taiwan and local people living near the parks, but also for Tamura and the bureaucrats, because it allowed national parks to become involved in the context of capitalism. However, the cultural aspect of Tourism created their different attitudes toward it. For many tourists, tropical landscapes are a symbol of

other attractive places. Consequently, this created some problems for national park planners especially in their attempts to exalt nationalism. For Tamura and other modern Japanese landscape theorists, mountains were suitable for Japanese landscapes, because they thought of them as a holistic zone, the point of overlooking others, and the centrality of nationalism. Tropical landscapes were the ‘other’ compared to Japanese landscapes because they evoked the imaginative geographies of the ‘South’ which had a tendency towards place-myth making, not only of paradise but also of barbarous and primitive humankind’s world, as seen in the discussions of Orientalism.

At first, Tamura pointed out the dual aspects of the landscapes of the Taiwan National Parks, that is, mountain landscapes as a symbol of Japanese landscapes and tropical landscapes as a characteristics of Taiwan landscapes. In other words, for Tamura, the Taiwan National Parks were hybrid spaces, which included both home and other place. However, Tamura gradually had to emphasize the importance of the mountain, because local intellectuals were paid attention to tropical landscape areas did not have mountain landscapes. Thus, he had to deny the importance of tourism, to exclude real tropical landscapes as other space of Imperial Japan.

For Tamura, tourism became the key in disrupting the consistency in his argument, as it brought otherness to national parks in Taiwan. Moreover, it broke the national spatial scale, because it did not rely on a specific spatial scale. Tourism was concerned not only with nationalistic authenticity and capitalism but also with otherness and political conflicts, because it was the space ‘in-between’.

## V. Conclusion

In my conclusion, I would like to make two points. First of all, by studying the case of Taiwanese national parks, it becomes clear that modern Japanese national parks were selected in mountains to exalt nationalism. Moreover, it becomes evident that national parks were very useful for colonial policy Japanizing people’s minds and bodies in Taiwan. Secondly, I find that tourism, local identities, and the conservation of nature were often made light of in selecting national parks in modern Japan, because these aspects went against the logic of Japanese national parks which were aimed at the production of exclusive homogeneity of national scale and national authenticity, by inviting otherness such as tropical landscapes to the home and complicating spatial scales.

## Note

- 1) Taiwanese national parks were also unique in the sense that they were the only national parks made in the Japanese colonies.
- 2) ‘*Nai-chi*’ literally means ‘inner-land’.
- 3) Tatun was the name of a volcano. Tsugitaka was the name of the second highest mountain in Japan, and Taroko was a famous valley. Nitaka was the name of the highest mountain in Japan, and Arisan was famous as a mountain tourist spot and a view point to look up to Nitaka mountain.
- 4) The following arguments were presented in the Taiwan National Parks Committee (1936).
- 5) In the beginning, Nitaka-Arisan was only called Nitaka.

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