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Perspective article

The dental clinical internship for the medical students during the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan

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In 1899, the Taiwan Government Medical School was established, initiating the medical school education system for cultivating the physicians. However, until the end of colonial rule in 1945, Taiwan had never established a dental school education system for cultivating the dentists. Compared with the medical education environment in the mainland Japan, the special situation of Taiwan with only one medical school highlighted the important position and

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significance of the dental education for the medical students at that time. The medical students who had taken the dental courses in the medical school could apply to the government for a license to practice certain parts of dentistry once they became the physicians. If they underwent at least one year of post-graduate dental clinical training, they could claim to have a dental specialty and obtain a full dental practice qualification. Initially, the dental curriculum of the Taiwan Government Medical School was under the surgical subject, including the lectures and clinical internship, and the medical students were arranged to study the dentistry in the fourth year (final year). By 1918, the dentistry became an independent subject, still consisting of the lectures and clinical internship, and was studied by the medical students in their third and fourth years.^{1,2} There is currently no literature describing the actual situation of the dental clinical internship for the medical students during the Japanese colonial period. This study attempted to search for the relevant historical materials to depict the situation of the medical students studying the dentistry at that time.

There is a photograph of the dental practice by the medical students in the Taiwan Government Medical College from the 3rd Graduation Yearbook of the Specialized Department of the Taiwan Government Medical College published in 1924 (Fig. 1). This photograph is included in the Campus Life Memory Database (<https://school.nmth.gov.tw/>), which illustrates the actual situation of the dental clinical internship for the medical students at that time. According to the 1923 and 1925 Introduction of Taiwan Government Medical College, the Taiwan Government Medical College offered a 4-year medical education program with two semesters per academic year. The dental course was conducted in the third and fourth years with the lectures of 1 and 0.5 h per week, respectively. The medical students were arranged to conduct the dental clinical internship in the dental outpatient clinic of the Taiwan Government Taipei Hospital.

Initially, the medical school only admitted the Taiwanese students. In 1918, the Specialized Department was established to recruit the Japanese students. The medical students in the photograph were enrolled in 1920 and graduated in 1924. At that time, there were totally 23 Japanese and 33 Taiwanese medical graduates.

The person on the upper right of this photograph was Dr. Kaname Ansawa (Fig. 1A). Dr. Ansawa graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University Medical Faculty in 1911. He was actually a surgeon, but worked as an assistant in the dental classroom of the Tokyo Imperial University before he came to Taiwan. In 1914, Dr. Ansawa was hired by the Taiwan Government Medical School to teach the medical students the dentistry under the course of surgery. He was the first dental teacher in Taiwan. In 1920, he went to Germany to study the dentistry. In 1923, he received a doctorate degree in medicine. He was also the first dental teacher with a doctorate degree in Taiwan.^{1–3}

The person on the upper left of this photograph was Dr. Shizuo Kobayashi (Fig. 1B). Dr. Kobayashi graduated from

the Japan Dental Medicine College in 1913. He ever studied in the dental classroom of the Tokyo Imperial University before he came to Taiwan. In 1921, Dr. Kobayashi was appointed as an associate professor of the Taiwan Government Medical College to teach the dentistry. He was the first dental teacher with a dental background in Taiwan. Moreover, he received a doctorate degree in medicine in 1938.^{1–3}

In 1918, the dentistry was reclassified as an independent subject in the medical curriculum. The Taiwan Government Medical School established the Graduate Department (including a dental classroom). In addition to serving as the dental internship place for the medical students, the dental department of the Taiwan Government Taipei Hospital became an educational institution for the medical students to study the dentistry after graduation. In 1919, the Taiwan Government Medical School was upgraded to the Taiwan Government Medical College. Thereby, the dental education was upgraded to the junior college level.^{1–3}

Furthermore, there was a Japanese title printed below this photograph: "Dental Outpatient Clinic" (Fig. 1C). In the photograph, we could see a group of students and the medical staff providing the dental treatments to the patients. At that time, the dental units were upright, with the patients sitting upright while the clinicians standing for doing dental examinations and treatments. All the dental units were facing windows to catch good natural lighting. Moreover, the dental department of the hospital already had the nursing staff to assist the dental clinicians in performing the dental procedures.

Interestingly, the construction of the knowledge system of the dentistry in Taiwan originated from the development of oral and maxillofacial surgery in Japan more than a hundred years ago. The dental classroom was founded in the Tokyo Imperial University Medical Faculty in May 1899. It was probably the oldest dental education and research institution in Asia with a long history and a great influence on the dental education and field.⁴ Both Dr. Ansawa and Dr. Kobayashi ever worked and studied in this dental classroom. They transplanted the dental education for the medical students from the Tokyo Imperial University to Taiwan. Moreover, Dr. Shwei Kuo, a Taiwanese dentist who graduated from the Nihon University Department of Dentistry in 1938, was once engaged in the teaching work in the dental classroom of the Taipei Imperial University Medical Faculty. He was hired as a lecturer in the National Taiwan University (NTU) College of Medicine in 1946 and continued to teach the dentistry to the medical students of the NTU.⁵ Therefore, this fine tradition of the dental education for the medical students continued into the post-war NTU. However, in the NTU, the dental clinical internship for the medical students only continued until 1963, while the dental lectures for the medical students continued until 2011.⁶ Fortunately, the historical and cultural assets regarding the dental education accumulated in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period were inherited and continued by the dental school of the NTU established in 1953.

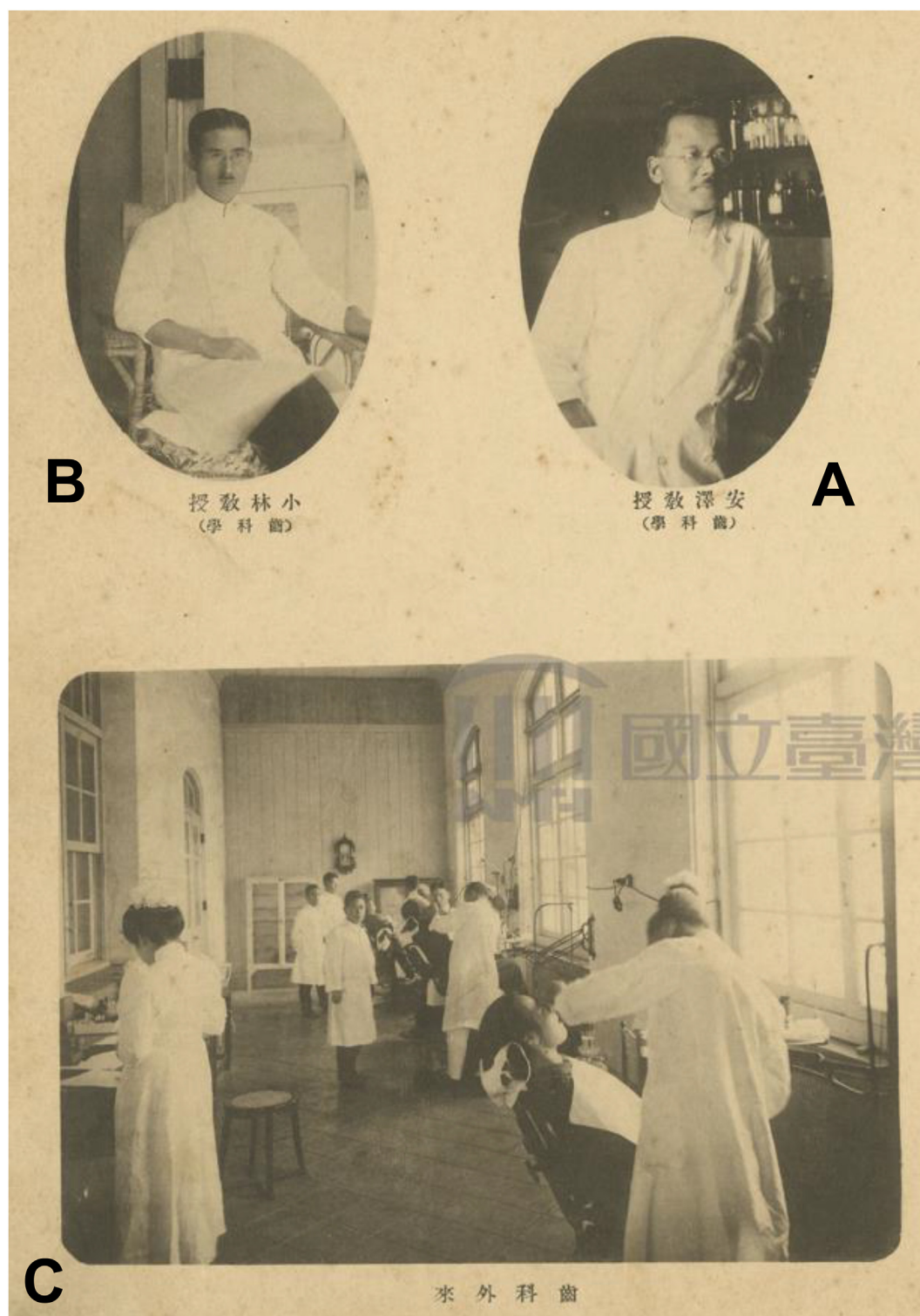


Figure 1 The dental practice in the Taiwan Government Medical College from the 3rd Graduation Yearbook of the Specialized Department of the Taiwan Government Medical College published in 1924 represented the dental teachers (A) Dr. Kaname Ansawa (upper right) and (B) Dr. Shizuo Kobayashi (upper left), and (C) their dental clinical internship for the medical students (lower). This image was available and accessed from the Campus Life Memory Database (<https://school.nmth.gov.tw/>).

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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