

Emily Lu, Florida State University (elu@fsu.edu)

Field Scholarship, 2025, Taipei

Final Fieldwork Report

During my field scholarship at the EFEO Taipei Centre, located in Academia Sinica, I was able to utilize multiple archives and libraries on site, and resources in Taipei city. The fieldwork served one dissertation chapter on the spread of Japanese military music (*gunka*) in colonial Taiwan (1898-1945), in which I sought to address the questions:

1) To what extent was Japanese music lessons incorporated into school curricula?

2) What were the essential and representative messages of Japanese military music in Taiwan, and how was it different from the songs on the Japanese homefront?

3) How accessible was Japanese military music to the general people of Taiwan?

4) How was Japanese military music promoted and narrated?

5) How familiar did the Taiwanese public become with Japanese military music?

6) To what extent did the non-Japanese participate in musicmaking?

I quickly found that *gunka* was accessible to everyday people in Taiwan, and that the Taiwanese schoolchildren who went to Japanese-language schools were all fairly familiar with Japanese *gunka*. Some Taiwanese songwriters also wrote *gunka*.

During my initial stage of research in Taipei, however, I had rehashed the questions to the following: 1) how did music education in schools materialize? 2) what types of music was taught and propagated? 3) what was military music's role in the everyday lives of Taiwanese people and imperial soldiers? The questions and the goal of the chapter had since evolved, after having met challenges in finding sources to varying degrees. The first two questions can only be answered to an extent, due to the inaccessibility to colonial textbooks. Many scholars and archivists I had consulted with were surprisingly unfamiliar with colonial textbooks, and I unfortunately did not have access to them during

my brief stay. However, the Taiwanese History Archive at Academia Sinica had a resourceful database of diaries, which yielded numerous entries with the keyword “gunka.”

The Director of EFEO Taipei, Dr. Frank Muyard, informed me of the 5th World Congress of Taiwan Studies that was taking place the very week I arrived. I attended the full conference and made acquaintances with several scholars who directed me to useful material. Professor Chen Chunbin, ethnomusicologist of indigenous Taiwanese music, pointed me to works by his own and other scholars that touched on colonial music during our conversation. Through Prof. Chen, I was able to connect with several other scholars who help provide suggestions on my carrying out a fruitful fieldwork.

At Academia Sinica’s various libraries and archives, namely the Chen Si’nian Library and the Taiwanese History Archive, I found newspaper entries, colonial gunka booklets produced in Taiwan, and personal diaries. I was most elated to locate a diary kept by a Japanese soldier stationed in Taipei in the 1930s, and he had provided several instances of gunka-singing in his diary entries. In Taiwan Central Library and National Taiwan Library, I also found records of colonial Japanese periodicals, publications, and reports written about Taiwanese people and culture, and the propagation of music and Japanese language on the island.

In addition, I utilized my time going to history museums and talking with museum docents, many of whom have relayed to me that the elders in their families all more or less knew Japanese songs. Alas, most of the elders are no longer with us so I was unable to connect directly with them. I also had a conversation with a record store owner who sold gunka CDs, who repeated to me what I had already gathered that the elderly would have remembered much of Japanese gunka.

Given the overall inaccessibility to a systemized archival of gunka and colonial music education, the dissertation chapter will shift away from that goal, and turn toward the written accounts kept by both Taiwanese and Japanese diarists, and rely on selected newspaper reporting of gunka performances. I seek to address the larger question of Japanese imperialists’ intention to propagate music in everyday

Taiwanese people's lives.



At the Fifth World Congress of Taiwan Studies at Academia Sinica. May 2025.



The Central Humanities Library at Academia Sinica.



One of the talks that I attended at Academia Sinica.