

The Taiwan Development Company and Indochina: Subimperialism, Development, and Colonial Status

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the activities of the Taiwan Development Company (TDC) in Indochina during the 1930s and 1940s. It uses the concept of subimperialism to explore corporate expansion into Indochina, the significance of the company's business ventures there, and the impact of overseas expansion on relations between Taiwanese and Japanese employees.

Subimperialism occurs when actors on the imperial periphery pursue expansion to advance their own interests rather than those of the imperial metropole or of the empire as a whole. The TDC and its sponsor, the Taiwan Government-General, wanted both to monopolize economic development projects in Indochina and to exploit the French colony's natural resources for the development of Taiwan. These aims put them in conflict with corporate and government interests based in the imperial metropole back in Japan that were also attempting to exploit Indochina.

TDC business ventures in Indochina were also significant in that they unified two policies that the Japanese colonial regime in Taiwan had pursued separately before the 1930s: the economic development of Taiwan and the extension of Japanese influence into the neighboring regions of South China and Southeast Asia. The TDC was the institutional reification of these twin goals of policy in Taiwan.

Finally, expansion into Indochina changed the relationship between Taiwanese and Japanese TDC employees, drawing them closer together and transforming the Taiwanese employees from colonial subjects to adjunct imperialists in the Japanese domination of Indochina.

Keywords: Colonial Taiwan, French Indochina, Imperialism, Subimperialism, Taiwan Development Company

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