

Land Administration and Land Documents —An Introduction to the Transcribed Land Documents in the Taiwan Sōtokufu Archives

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ABSTRACT

In the early 20th century, the Japanese colonial government carried out a comprehensive land survey in Taiwan for nearly 30 years and established a detailed and thorough land registry. Making use of these land documents produced in previous times, the Taiwan Sōtokufu sought to clarify complicated land relations, and build upon them clear land rights for each plot of land. These land documents acquired during the land investigation process were partly preserved in the Taiwan Sōtokufu Archives, and totaled around 15,000 pieces. They amounted to nearly 75 percent of the published land documents at present.

In the process of transcribing the land documents, the Taiwan Sōtokufu examined carefully the parties involved, the locations of the pieces of land and the authenticity of the documents. Moreover, they adopted the newly established land registry when transcribing the land documents. Such efforts enable us to compare these traditional land documents with modern maps, the household census registry, and the land registry, thus making possible the mapping of locations of land involved and the reconstruction of local development history.

Keywords: land documents, Taiwan Sōtokufu Archives, land tax reform, land survey, land registry