

Early Overseas Expansion of Japan's Civil Engineering and Construction Industry: A Case Study of Korea's Gyeongin Railway and Its Comparison with Taiwan's North-south Railway

Lung-pao Tsai

ABSTRACT

Development of the Gyeongin railway has important implications in modern history not only of Korea but also of Japan. It marks the first overseas expansion of Japan's civil engineering industry and is also the first wide-track railway ever constructed by the Japanese. Built almost at the same time, the Gyeongin Railway and the north-south railway of Taiwan revealed varied paths of Japanese overseas expansion under different local conditions in the two countries.

This research is a comparative study of the economic history between Korea and Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule. Comparison between the Gyeongin railway and the north-south railway of Taiwan would reveal not only their similarities and contrasts but also their relationship. Such analysis in the context of colonial history serves to clarify the background behind the coexisting sameness and difference, examine the fight between United States and Japan over the rightful ownership of the Gyeongin railway, and trace how Kajima Corporation carried out the construction in Korea. Finally, detailed exploration of the two railways sheds light on also the contrasts and characteristics of development between Korea and Taiwan.

Keywords: Korea Gyeongin Railway, Taiwan North-south Railway, Shibusawa Eiichi, Civil Engineering and Construction Industry, Kajima Corporation, Colony