

Development of Shimizu Gumi in Taiwan under Japanese Rule (1899-1945)

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ABSTRACT

Shimizu Gumi was a civil construction company in Japan with construction skills and expertise deeply trusted by the government, though its business clients were mainly private enterprises. Under early Japanese rule, Taiwan promoted many civil construction projects, and construction companies in Japan came to Taiwan one after another. Most of the early projects involved civil engineering; hence, the construction-centered Shimizu Gumi was not actively developing in Taiwan. Neither did it undertake many projects nor open any branch office; and the projects it undertook were mostly for the military. In August 1930, Shimizu Gumi, in the face of recession, took action to establish a temporary branch office in Taiwan. In February 1932, Toyokichi Doi was sent to Taiwan to serve as director of the temporary branch office, which was upgraded as an official branch in February 1936. During this time, in addition to the military, Taiwan's central government, local government offices and private industries became its clients, and the types of projects it undertook became more diversified. Following the outbreak of war, the Taiwan branch, like the head office, supported the national policy and sided with the military in promoting southward expansion. The scale of the branch thus expanded rapidly, and the amount of projects undertaken increased greatly. In 1943, the Taiwan branch building was completed, demonstrating the company's will for active cooperation with the military and long-term development in Taiwan. In line with military expansion, the volume of overseas projects surged accordingly; thus the Guangdong branch was set up in February 1939 followed by the Hong Kong branch in February 1943. Not only did the company carry out construction projects, it was also involved in combat. Driven by the southward expansion policy, the branch became an important backing for enterprises advancing to the south and for the military deploying tactics. To support the industrialization policy of the Government-General of Taiwan and the southward expansion of the Japanese Empire, the Taiwan branch

made the southern regions as well as the areas around Kaohsiung and Hualien port key districts. Prominent industries were also important clients of the branch, clearly demonstrating their contribution to the industrialization policy. In addition, the branch office played an important role in the development of Kaohsiung and the deployment of Taiwanese and Japanese troops in southern Taiwan.

Keywords: Shimizu Gumi, Civil Construction, Industrialization, Southward Expansion, Kaohsiung