

Conflicts in Management Philosophies and Factional Disputes: Establishment of Taisei Fire and Marine Insurance Company in Japanese Colonial Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The Taisei Fire and Marine Insurance Company, founded in 1920, was the most important property insurance company established in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era. Moreover, it was among the few companies jointly established by the then five most powerful families and local tycoons. Previous studies from the perspective of economic history focused mainly on the restructuring of shareholding members in this company. For example, changes in shareholding ratio between Taiwanese and Japanese investors were considered a reflection of the growing domination of Japanese capital over Taiwanese investment. From the perspective of family history, Taisei Fire and Marine was regarded by each shareholding member as part of their family business and investments. However, details on its internal operations and personnel have not yet been thoroughly investigated.

Through examining relevant records pertinent to key long-tenured board members, such as Hsien-Tang Lin and Teisuke Mashi, this study explored ongoing internal disputes over operations and personnel. The experiences of those involved in Taisei Fire and Marine reveal the existence of a gap between the ideal and reality of corporations purported to be successful Japanese-Taiwanese joint ventures during the colonial era. The networking, company operations, and feelings expressed by key board members recorded in the literature indicate that Taiwanese investment was not subordinated or in opposition to Japanese capital. Rather, Taiwanese investors cooperated and competed with their Japanese counterparts and constantly strived to adjust their own status.

Keywords: Taisei Fire and Marine Insurance Company, Property Insurance, Insurance History, Japanese Colonial Period