

Hakka Settlements of the Pingtung Plains at the Periphery of the Qing Empire, 1700-1890

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ABSTRACT

Hakka settlements at the Pingtung Plains of southern Taiwan illuminate a peculiar pattern of land concentration. About 70-80% of arable lands belonged to corporate landlords, such as the organizations in charge of ancestral worship and devotion to local deities. Another feature of these Hakka settlements is the establishment of militia groups, known as the Six Units. Village heads, family elders and other group leaders pulled together to share the costs and formed a military power, either as protector or predator. This essay analyzes the development of Hakka land ownership and the establishment of exclusive settlements. It also highlights the importance of aquifer, in the vicinity of which Hakka settlers occupied at the Pingtung Plains. Such location ensured abundant supply of groundwater for both agricultural cultivation and daily consumption.

Keywords: Pingtung Plains, Hakka Settlement, Tenurial Relations, Corporate Landlord, Aquifer