Modern Japan’s Southern Expansionism: Focusing on Taiwan Government-General

Lin Sze Ming

This paper attempts to examine southern expansionism of modern Japan by focusing on the policies of Taiwan Government-General (TGG, Taiwān Sotokufu). In other words, the author tries to figure out the characteristics and the transition of Japan’s southern expansionism during the periods Meiji, Taisho and Showa. For this reason, this paper discusses southern expansionism policies of TGG and its roles in modern history by proving the following facts: TGG’s preparation for southern expansion, the rebirth of Department of Foreign Relations, research contents of Department of Research in TGG, functions and roles of Nanyo Association and Taiwan Southern Association, the establishment and businesses of Taiwan Development Company (Taiwan Takushoku Kabushiki Gaisha) and Taihoku Imperial University’s academic research about Southern China and Southern Asia. Contrast to the previous research methods such as “Japan—Southern Asia” or “Taiwan—Southern China and Southern Asia”, this paper focuses on the role and functions of TGG in order to confirm and revalue the relationships among Japan, Taiwan, Southern China and Southern Asia in southern expansion.

In addition, the paper is not only based on the results of previous researches, but also constructed by collecting and analyzing historical materials which are possessed in institutions, corporations, universities of Japan and Taiwan.

There are seven chapters in this paper, including the introduction and conclusion.

In Chapter 1, the author confirms that there are three climaxes of southern expansionism in Japanese history. They are mid-Meiji period (the time in about 1890), Taisho period (1910s) and the second decade of Showa period (1935–1940). At the beginning, in mid-Meiji period, southern expansionism was popular in the private sector, and the contents were diverse but neglected by Japanese government. However, those statements about southern expansion disappeared later because Japanese government took action more slowly than western countries when they expanded their powers in South Asia. Besides, Japan's immigration policy failed, too. On the other hand, different from Meiji period, the expansionism in Taisho period was much more practical. In Showa period, this expansionism transformed into national policy level by the following events: “the Basic
National Policy" (August 5, 1936, decided in the Five-minister Conference), "The Principles of the Basic National Policy" (July 26, 1940), "The Principles to Cope with the Changing World Situation" (July 27, 1940), the public statement of "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" scheme (August 1, 1940) and "the Imperial Conference" (December 1, 1941, which caused World War II).

In this context, it was clear that TGG started its expansion policies faster than Japan government. For example, the rebirth of Department of Foreign Relations, "the Festival for 40th Anniversary of Taiwan Occupation" (October 1935), "the Research Committee for Tropical Industries" (October 1935), the establishment of Taiwan Development Company (November 1935) and the slogan, "to be the Imperial People, to be industrialized and to be the base for southern expansion", are all determined policies. Finally, the idea of "South Governor-General" was announced in "the Strategies to Intensify Southern Colonial Organizations" (1938). Furthermore, the Cabinet decided "the Role of Taiwan in Southern Policy" and officially made Taiwan a "base" for southern expansion.

Therefore, the idea and policy of southern expansionism transformed because of the international and national changes. And TGG was involved with these changes and its policies were forced to be alternated as well.

In Chapter 2, the author describes how TGG built up Taiwan as an expansion base from 1910s to 1920s. After Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), Taiwan was attractive to some people in the government, army, business and media about the possibility to be a base for southern expansion. TGG's bureaucracy such as Uchida Yoshikichi, Simomura Hiroshi, Haraguchi Takejiro, Yagyu Katuyoshi, were those who made this idea come true. Moreover, in order to intensify its influence towards Southern China and Southern Asia, TGG not only established trade associations, tour companies, banks, schools for medicine, business and agriculture, but also provided special budgets for shipping. TGG also published "Taiwan Times" as an official magazine.

Therefore, it is obvious that the preparation for southern expansion was carried out smoothly under TGG's plan and aid. These efforts, in both manpower and goods, provided Japan with a sound foundation for expansion in Showa period.

In Chapter 3, the author focuses on the Department of Foreign Relations and Department of Research in TGG, and examines their roles, functions and the process of their reconstruction. Besides, Nanyo Association and Taiwan Southern Association were also important external organizations, which had many business links with TGG.

As a department of TGG, the Department of Foreign Relations transited several times with necessities. For example, the rebirth and enlargement of the Department of
Foreign Relations (September, 1935) proved TGG’s excellent researches about Southern China and Southern Asia. Moreover, the Department of Research had the same function to provide TGG and Japanese government with information about these two regions. Furthermore, the role and functions of Nanyo Association were mentioned. Den Kenjirō, the Governor-General, and Uchita Yoshikichi, the Minister of Administration, were the president and vice president of this association. And TGG had been providing financial support from its establishment to the end of World War II. On the other hand, as a cultural organization, Taiwan Southern Association had multiple functions, such as education, arts, health, cultural events, and economy surveys, etc.

In short, TGG endeavored to build an information network through numerous organizations. And being aware of maintaining the relationship with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TGG had freedom to run policies at the same time. However, the coming things such as “the Basic National Policy”, the start of China-Japan War, the announcement of “Asian New Order” and “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” scheme enforced the polices to turn to another direction. It was clear that Japan’s southern expansion policies were built on the achievements provided by TGG. At the same time, due to the onset of China-Japan War, TGG’s policies were involved and combined into national policies. TGG lost its autonomy and independence in running policies as the influences of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the army increased.

In Chapter 4, the author not only examines the process of Taiwan Development Company’s establishment, but also probes TGG’s intention of southern expansion.

Due to the 40th Anniversary of Taiwan Occupation, Research Committee for Tropical Industries was held. It was a symbol that TGG appealed its importance as a colonial government to Japan government. Through the committee and Imperial Cabinet, TDC was set up as a national policy company in 1937. According to the laws of TDC, the personnel of top management and overseas businesses were belonged to Minister of Development, and the businesses in Taiwan were belonged to TGG. It shows TGG’s initiative in the process of TDC establishment. Moreover, the business territory of Taiwan was extended to overseas such as Thailand, the Dutch East Indies and some places in Southern Asia. Among all, many ventures were established in Xiamen, Guangdong, Hainan Island in Southern China as well as in French Indo-china, Thailand, British Malay Peninsula, the Dutch East Indies and Philippine. Obviously, it shows that TDC constructed a base for southern expansion and the methods of cooperation, which had shifted from economy to military as well.

In Chapter 5, the author analyzes the roles of Taiboku Imperial University in this context. First, the curricula, including Southern Asian History, Local Customs and Ethnology, Tropical Agriculture, Sugar Production, Tropical Stockbreeding, Tropical
Health and Tropical Diseases, etc., was unique and different from other imperial universities in Japan. Second, Southern Humanities Institution (since 1943) and Southern Science Resource Institution were established in the critical time of Asian-Pacific War. Third, the Hainan Island research teams completed their missions because of the close cooperation of TGG, Taihoku Imperial University and Hainan Island Navy.

In other words, by examining the contents of curriculum and internal organizations, it is doubtless that Taihoku Imperial University is established by TGG and regarded as a university of Southern Research from the beginning. And during World War II, Taihoku Imperial University's science research and education were finally encouraged by Japanese government.

In short, this paper confirms that southern expansionism attracted the attention of the private sector in Meiji period, recognized by the government in Taisho period and finally supported by both the government and private sector in Showa period. The paper also examines the changes of relationship between Japanese government and TGG. In other words, their ideas and policies about southern expansion were different and diverse in 1920s, became closer in 1930s, and were combined in 1940s conclusively.

Therefore, under the changing world circumstances, TGG's leadership of southern expansion transformed and was taken over by the Japanese government at the end. From 1895 to 1935, TGG had been accomplishing policies in many ways, including diplomacy, economy and education, etc. As soon as the slogan, "to be the Imperial People, to be industrialized and to be the base for southern expansion", was announced, TGG switched its policy mode from economy to military step by step. In this process, TGG's pride reached the climax when the idea of "South Governor-General" was created. However, it was frustrated immediately as "the Great East-Asia Province" was established by Japanese government. Regardless of TGG's aid in manpower and goods, the prime function was to support the military act. In this way, TGG lost its freedom to run policy and was deprived of the leadership position in southern expansion.

It should not be a neglected fact that the policies, which TGG had been accomplishing by itself from the beginning, were playing important roles in modern Japan's southern expansionism. It is because that Japan's policies concerning Southern Asia in the period of Asian-Pacific War were based on TGG's relevant policies and were achieved.