

Rediscovering the Irrigation Canals by Local-Based Historical Maps in Taiwan

Chia-Jung Wu* & Jinn-Guey Lay

Department of Geography, National Taiwan University

D99228005@ntu.edu.tw*

Like in many Asian countries, the irrigation canals in Taiwan have played an indispensable role for the agricultural development over centuries. The irrigation canals of Taiwan are not only significant for their physical function, but also endowed with cultural values developed under an emigrant and colonial history. By exploring the archives of Taiwan Government-General during the Japanese Colonization (1895~1945), this study aims to uncover the hidden stories of the irrigation development in prewar Taiwan. While the regional irrigation maps, depicting the large-scale official system, are much focused in the former research, the local-based maps attached to individual irrigation application documents are investigated in this study. In addition to the valuable information about geographical location, these local irrigation maps were found unique in its form reflecting upon the private initiatives for land cultivation and irrigation construction. A brand-new perspective about the historical maps as a social construct as well as a methodology tool will be illustrated by specific cases.